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ABSTRACT

This book highlights the reform policies, practices, and procedures of nine promising Goals 2000 subgrantees. It describes how Goals 2000 and/or Technology Literacy Challenge Fund (TLCF) grants are being used to start, support, and/or sustain these reforms. The report examines the nine subgrantees' reform efforts using a multiple case-study approach and addresses the following research questions, grouped into four main categories: (1) What reform efforts have the subgrantees implemented to improve teaching and learning in their districts and how have Goals 2000 and/or TLCF funds sustained these efforts; (2) What evidence suggests that the reform efforts have been successful; (3) How and to what extent do these subgrantees coordinate program funds to promote reform; and (4) What do these case studies tell policymakers about the planning and implementation of successful programs? The findings show that subgrantees implemented several reform efforts to improve teaching and learning, such as the adoption/creation and implementation of state and local standards and curricula. Successes were evident through state and local assessment scores and improvements in professional development. The flexible nature of Goals 2000 subgrants enabled districts to spend the funds on their priorities. Finally, several policy issues emerged, including the finding that districts play a significant role in implementing systemic standards-based reform. (RJM)

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Goals 2000: Case Studies of Promising Districts

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Goals 2000:
Case Studies of Promising Districts

Task Order under Contract #EA94053001

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Standards-based reform is a framework for improving the educational achievement of all students in our nation's schools. It involves raising national, state, and local expectations about what students can do, and holding schools and districts accountable for helping all students meet those expectations. The Goals 2000: Educate America Act, passed in 1994, supports states in the implementation of systemic standards-based reform. The legislation encourages states to develop content and performance standards in core subject areas, and to align their entire educational systems – including assessment, curriculum, instruction, professional development, family participation, and community involvement – around these standards.

Since the Goals 2000: Educate America Act was passed, Congress has appropriated over $1.7 billion to support states in their efforts to implement standards-based reform. Districts in all 50 states, as well as D.C., Puerto Rico, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the outlying areas, participate in Goals 2000. Districts in 48 states receive funding through their SEAs; districts in the remaining two states receive Goals 2000 awards directly from the U.S. Department of Education. The Goals 2000 legislation mandates that at least 90 percent of each state's award must be subgranted to school districts and/or consortia of districts (subgrantees) to implement systemic standards-based reform efforts at the local level. With the Goals 2000 funds, the states made subgrants to over one-third of the 14,367 districts in the nation.

Generally, funds have been used to further state reform by starting, supporting, or sustaining local reform efforts that are coordinated with the state's overall vision of reform. Subgrantees use their Goals 2000 funds to support local reform (usually the development of state and local standards, curricula, and assessments), professional development, and preservice teacher education.

The purposes of this study are to highlight the reform policies, practices, and procedures of nine promising Goals 2000 subgrantees and to describe how Goals 2000 and/or Technology Literacy Challenge Fund (TLCF) grants, which are federal grants designed to support districts and schools in the purchase and use of technology in classrooms, are being used to start, support, and/or sustain these reform efforts. The study examines the reform efforts of nine subgrantees using a multiple case-study approach. See Appendix A for a profile of the subgrantees selected for study.

This study addresses the following research questions, grouped into four main categories:

1. What reform efforts have the subgrantees implemented to improve teaching and learning in their district(s)? How have Goals 2000 and/or TLCF funds started/supported/sustained these efforts?

2. What evidence suggests that the reform efforts have been successful? What barriers do districts confront in implementing standards-based reform?

3. How and to what extent do these subgrantees coordinate Goals 2000 and/or TLCF funds and other federal program funds to promote reform, particularly standards-based reform?

4. What do these case studies tell policymakers about the planning and implementation of successful programs? About technical assistance improvement strategies?

Findings

1. What reform efforts have the subgrantees implemented to improve teaching and learning in their district(s)? How have Goals 2000 and/or TLCF funds started, supported, and/or sustained these efforts?

The findings indicated that subgrantees implemented several reform efforts to improve teaching and learning. The reform efforts included:

- The adoption/creation and implementation of state and local standards and curricula;
- The understanding, development, and use of assessments;
- The provision of professional development and methods of instruction; and
- The development of parental and community involvement programs.

The findings also revealed that the subgrantees used Goals 2000 subgrants to fund essential elements of their overall reform efforts. Generally, the use of Goals 2000 funds fit seamlessly into the subgrantees' efforts to develop and implement standards-based reform. Several common characteristics of how the subgrantees are implementing standards-based reforms emerged. They include:

- **The engagement of teachers and other district-level personnel in the creation of local standards, benchmarks, and curricula.**

- **The use of assessment as the indicator of student growth and development and as the driver of instructional change.**

- **The adoption of research-based methods of professional development that actively engage teachers in job-embedded in-service activities, such as curriculum and assessment development, collaborative unit and lesson planning, the use of technology, and performance-based instruction and assessment.**

- **The development of positive relationships with the school community, including parents, businesses, government agencies, and community-based organizations.**

- **The existence of additional characteristics.** These characteristics seem to bind the multiple changes occurring in the districts together, creating a cohesive reform effort. They include:

    - A strong superintendent able to coalesce all stakeholders in the district around the goal of increased student achievement.

    - The implementation of an integrated system of standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessments, with assessment driving instructional change.

    - Reliance on research-based methods of professional development, family involvement, and school-change models to implement change. Often this involves enhancing the capacity of district personnel, particularly principals and teachers, to effect change while increasing their decision-making authority.

    - The encouragement of a systemwide movement toward performance-based instruction and assessment.

    - Reliance on a model of continuous improvement which supports risk-taking, constant growth and development, and high expectations for students and adults in the district.

    - The provision and increased use of technology as both a management and instructional tool. Also included in this theme is the increased use of data – often broken out by school, classroom, individual student, and test item – to drive decisions about instructional focus.

2. What evidence suggests that the reform efforts have been successful? What challenges do districts confront in implementing standards-based reform?

Types of evidence of success: The subgrantees listed several indicators as evidence that their reform efforts are successful. These indicators included: **state and local assessment scores, principal observations of instructional practices, teacher evaluations of professional development activities, levels of parental involvement, school climate surveys, and teacher observations of student engagement. They also included the quality and quantity of business and community partnerships in their districts as indicators of success.** The variety of indicators of success reported by the subgrantees is the result of the district goals related to students outcomes, as well as the of implementation of reform.

The subgrantees also cited several indicators which suggest that they are realizing student achievement goals. These indicators include increases in student achievement scores and evidence that cohesive standards-based systems are emerging, both of which were conditions for selection as a subject of study. Two other indicators were cited by most of the districts: evidence

that districts are working to improve the educational outcomes of *all* students, and evidence that student assessment is driving reform activities.

The subgrantees confront a number of challenges to the successful implementation of standards-based reform. These challenges include:

- **Teacher capacity to implement standards-based reform.** To make major changes in schools, many teachers, principals, and other instructional staff will have to increase their knowledge of and ability to use new approaches to teaching and learning. These types of staff development are costly and time-consuming, particularly for teachers already charged with multiple responsibilities during and after the school day.

- **Teacher "buy-in," or willingness to participate in the reform effort.** In most districts, the teachers, principals, and district administrators interviewed spoke of small numbers of teachers who were not yet persuaded of the need to change curriculum, instruction, and assessment – or who were as yet unable to make those changes due to isolation, lack of training, and other factors.

- **Making changes to basic components of the educational system.** For example, some of the districts perceive the development and use of new methods of assessment, particularly to evaluate performance-based student work, as a challenge. Making the transition to standards-based instruction also poses challenges, especially in larger districts, where a district curriculum alone, without professional development and in some cases accountability measures, does not typically change instruction.

- **Serving the needs of *all* students**. In some cases, interviewees expressed concern about the ability of at-risk students to achieve high standards in a given time frame. Other interviewees expressed concerns about how school systems will serve students who fail to achieve established benchmarks.

- **Sustaining the momentum of the reform effort**. In some districts, significant change in content areas such as language arts, mathematics, and/or science has already been accomplished. These changes required a great deal of work from teachers, community members, and others. However, district officials acknowledge that other subject areas, such as art and social studies, will require similar attention.

3. How and to what extent do these subgrantees coordinate Goals 2000 and/or TLCF funds and other federal program funds to promote reform, particularly standards-based reform?

The flexible nature of Goals 2000 subgrants enables districts to spend the funds on their priorities as outlined in their strategic plans. Many of the subgrantees reported an increase in blended funding in the last few years. Some of the subgrantees submit consolidated applications for federal programs, while others are moving in that direction.

4. What do these case studies tell policymakers about the planning and implementation of successful programs? About technical assistance improvement strategies?

Several policy issues emerge from the case-study data. They include:

- **Districts play a significant role in directing the overall implementation of systemic standards-based reform.** Districts set goals, increase the capacity of the adults in the district to meet those goals, and facilitate school change. This finding suggests that district leaders require continually upgraded professional development in implementing key elements of standards-based reforms. In addition, district leaders need more opportunities to interact with leaders in other districts to share best practices.

- **Superintendents who emphasize curriculum and instruction are able to provide and support a coherent vision for standards-based reform.** Policies that encourage superintendents to articulate visions of reform that focus on curriculum and instruction would support reform efforts.

- **Districts need flexible funding, such as Goals 2000, to implement systemic standards-based reform.**

- **While each of the districts studied addresses reform in different ways, most of them are aware of best-practices research and implement reform efforts based on relevant findings.** In efforts to disseminate best-practices research, targeting district leaders, school administrators, and teachers would further support reform efforts.

- **Some of the subgrantees used rigorous evaluation methods to assess progress in implementing standards-based reform, but many did not.** This finding suggests that districts need technical support in evaluating standards-based reform. Providing funds for district administrators to concentrate on evaluation as well as technical assistance would be beneficial to most districts nationwide.

- **Subgrantees address gaps in educational outcomes by targeting additional resources to schools not demonstrating adequate academic progress.** Grants that target additional resources to such schools could be established. Low-performing schools could be paired with higher-performing schools, in an attempt to share successful practices.

- **Successful reform requires changes in teaching practices.** The districts in the study require that teachers adopt performance-based instruction and assessment methods. Policies that incorporate these teaching methods in preservice training, and in continuous professional development, will help teachers make these important changes.

I. Introduction

Standards-based Reform

Standards-based reform is a framework for improving the educational achievement of all students in our nation's schools. It involves raising national, state, and local expectations about what students can do, and holding schools and districts accountable for helping students meet those expectations. An important component of standards-based reform is the creation of challenging content and performance standards. Content standards identify what students should learn in a particular subject area, and performance standards specify how well students should know the material. Generally, the challenging standards envisioned by policymakers focus on higher-order thinking, conceptual understanding, and problem solving (McLaughlin and Shepard, 1996). These standards, at their best, focus on teaching students to reason and use what they learn in real-world situations.

Challenging standards require students to have a deep understanding in particular subject areas. Such changes require hands-on experiments, projects, and the application of knowledge to real-world problems. Organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the National Research Council developed standards in mathematics and science, respectively. Many states have used these standards as guides in developing their own. To implement these new learning expectations at the school level, teachers and other district staff will have to increase their teaching and management skills through ongoing professional development.

This shift in learning expectations also has important ramifications for assessment and accountability. Determining whether students meet challenging standards necessitates the use of aligned assessments. Many such assessments require students to demonstrate mastery of subject areas and to construct answers to problems by integrating knowledge and skills. The movement from isolated facts to an integrated use of knowledge for problem solving requires new ways of testing. To align their assessments with their standards, many states engaged in standards-based reform adopt and/or create tests that have open-ended questions and require students to write essays, explain their reasoning, analyze data, and synthesize information from different sources. At the classroom level, some states and districts encourage the use of performance-based assessments which include projects, demonstrations, and portfolios of student work.

A standards-based system of reform also requires a strong accountability system. Many states have instituted accountability systems that use state assessments of student performance, along with other indicators, to determine if student academic achievement is increasing. These states often set targets for schools and districts and monitor their progress toward meeting those targets. In addition to monitoring overall progress, accountability systems can identify inadequacies in the system and ensure that they are addressed. When weaknesses are not adequately addressed at the school or district level, a strong state accountability system may require personnel changes and/or shifts to state control of schools or districts. Together, challenging standards, aligned

assessment, and a strong accountability system are integral components of standards-based reform.

Goals 2000: Educate America Act

The Goals 2000: Educate America Act, passed in 1994, supports states and local districts in the implementation of standards-based reform. The legislation encourages states to develop content and performance standards in core subject areas, and to align the components of their entire educational systems – including assessments, curriculum, instruction, professional development, accountability systems, and parental and community involvement – around these standards.

Since the Goals 2000: Educate America Act was passed, Congress has appropriated over $1.7 billion to support states in their efforts to implement standards-based reform. The legislation mandates that at least 90 percent of each state's award be subgranted to school districts and/or consortia of districts (subgrantees) to implement systemic standards-based reform efforts at the local level. Districts in all 50 states, as well as D.C., Puerto Rico, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the outlying areas, participate in Goals 2000. Forty-eight SEAs made competitive subgrants to districts based on local plans for reform; districts in the remaining two states receive Goals 2000 awards directly from the U.S. Department of Education. Goals 2000 grants to states ranged from $370,000 in Wyoming to $54.7 million in California. With these funds, states made subgrants to over one-third of the 14,367 districts in the nation. Generally, funds have been used to further state reform by starting, supporting, or sustaining local reform efforts that are coordinated with the state's overall vision of reform. Subgrantees use their Goals 2000 funds to support local reform (usually the development of state and local standards, curricula, and assessments), professional development, and preservice teacher education.

Technology Literacy Challenge Fund grants also support efforts to help all students meet state and local standards. These grants support districts and schools in the purchasing and use of technology in classrooms. In 1997, states were awarded almost $200,000,000 in TLCF grants.

States, supported by the federal government, have taken the lead in the development of systemic standards-based reform. Several research projects have identified the roles that states are playing in the reform effort and have assessed their success in planning and implementing educational reform (Goertz, Floden, and O'Day, 1996; Massell, Kirst, and Hoppe, 1997). Similarly, because it is widely accepted that reform is most successful when individual schools are viewed as the unit of change, many studies have identified school-level factors that support or inhibit reform (Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore, 1982; Edmonds, 1979).

Less is known about the role of districts in reform efforts, though some information is emerging. Studies often view districts as recipients of state policy or as the context for school-level change (Spillane, 1996). In these roles, districts interpret and implement state standards, and attempt to provide the framework for a coordinated reform effort linked to these standards (Knudson and Wiley, 1997). From the first national survey of states and districts on the progress they are making in implementing federally funded reform, districts with more experience in reform (districts in states that began their reforms before other states) also show higher levels of progress

and understanding in implementing key components of reform than other districts. From this survey we also know that district size and poverty level influence districts' ability to implement standards-based reform, with smaller and high-poverty districts making less progress in implementing reform (Hannaway and Kimball, 1998).

About This Report

This report, based on research conducted in 1998 by the Urban Institute, highlights the policies, practices, and procedures of nine Goals 2000 subgrantees that show promise in successfully implementing systemic standards-based reform. The report examines the reform efforts using a multiple case-study approach.

This report contains three additional sections. The next section describes the methodology used to conduct the study. Following the "Methodology" section, the next section presents the findings of the study. It uses the results of a cross-case analysis to address the research questions. The nine individual case studies are presented in the last section.

II. Methods

Research questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What reform efforts have the subgrantees implemented to improve teaching and learning in their district(s)? How have Goals 2000 and/orTechnology Literacy Challenge Fund (TLCF) grants started, supported, and/or sustained these efforts?
2. What evidence suggests that the reform efforts have been successful? What challenges do districts confront in implementing standards-based reform?
3. How and to what extent do these subgrantees coordinate Goals 2000 and/or TLCF funds and other federal program funds to promote reform, particularly standards-based reform?
4. What do these case studies tell policymakers about the planning and implementation of successful programs? About technical assistance improvement strategies?

Site selection

These subgrantees were chosen because of their ability to demonstrate their implementation of a standards-based system, increased student achievement, and progress in systemic standards-based reform as well as linkages between the reform efforts and the use of Goals 2000 funds, either alone or in conjunction with other federal grants.

Initially, state Goals 2000 coordinators nominated 105 subgrantees that most effectively used Goals 2000 and/or TLCF grants to support reform efforts. The U.S. Department of Education supplemented the nominations with two subgrantees that were not nominated by their state coordinators but that appeared to be implementing their grants effectively. The U.S. Department of Education then screened the nominations and reduced the pool to 30 subgrantees.

The list of the 30 subgrantees was forwarded to the Urban Institute for further screening. The Urban Institute research team conducted telephone interviews with the nominees' district Goals 2000 coordinators. Through these interviews, the research team obtained information regarding the implementation of reform practices, the role of Goals 2000 and/or TLCF funds in the reform effort, and the types of outcome data available for review and analysis. In addition to the information gathered through the interviews, the research team also gathered demographic information (e.g., metropolitan status, size of district(s), race/ethnicity of student body, percentage of students living in poverty) on each of the nominated subgrantees from the 1993-94 Common Core Database.

Using these sources of information, the research team selected nine of the thirty subgrantees for further study. This selection was based on the following criteria:

- The ability of the subgrantee to demonstrate increased student achievement.
- The ability of the subgrantee to demonstrate progress toward achieving intermediate outcome measures, such as increased capacity or greater alignment of standards, curriculum and assessment.
- The ability of the subgrantee to demonstrate the promotion of systemic standards-based reform.
- The ability of the subgrantee to make links between the reform efforts and the use of Goals 2000 and/or TLCF funds, either alone or in conjunction with other federal grants.

In addition, the subgrantees were selected to maximize variation across subgrantee size, subgrantee location, subgrantee metropolitan status, student demographics (race/ethnicity and poverty status), type of Goals 2000 subgrant(s) received, and state policy context.
The nine subgrantees that were selected were:

Broward County Public Schools (FL)
Gresham-Barlow Unified School District No. 10Jt (OR)
Jersey City Public Schools (NJ)
Kent County Public Schools (MD)
Las Cruces Public Schools (NM)
Maine School Administrative District #27 (ME)
McAllen Independent School District (TX)
North Carolina Math-Science Consortium/Algebra Readiness through Environmental Studies Project (NC)
Wichita Public Schools (KS)

Table: Profile of Subgrantees Selected for Study

District	State	Size	Metrop. Status	Demographics of Students in District			Type of Grant	Grant Yr.	Grant Amt.
				%AA[1]	%H[2]	%FRPL[3]			
Broward County	FL	230,552	Urban	36	16	39	Preservice/Inservice Prof. Dev.	1996	$237,550
							Local Education Reform	1996	$650,000
							Electronic Curriculum Planning	1997	$270,000
							Local Education Reform	1997	$150,000
							Professional Development	1997	$440,000
							STAR Project	1998	$235,000
Gresham-Barlow	OR	11,000	Suburban	1	3	21	Planning	1995	$50,000
							Assessment 2000 Project	1996	$172,000
							Standards 2000 Project	1997	$78,000
							Science Design 2000 Project	1997	$54,000
Jersey City	NJ	30,000	Urban	40	38	84	Professional Development (3)	1995-98	$499,999
Kent County	MD	2,900	Rural	25	2	37	Local Education Reform	1994	$10,000
							Innovative Programs	1995	$281,371
							Continuation	1996	$101,507
							Continuation	1997	$117,194
							Technology Literacy Challenge Fund	1997	$109,410
Las Cruces	NM	22,169	Urban	2	62	51	Local Education Reform	1995	$50,000
							Preservice	1995	$16,000
							Local Education Reform	1996	$45,000
							Local Education Reform	1997	$50,000
							Professional Development	1997	$45,000
Maine School Administrative District #27	ME	1,377	Rural	0	1	48	Implementation	1996	$59,339
							State Assessment Pilot	1997	$75,000
							Reflective Practice	1997	$2,000
							Implementation	1997	$30,000
							Consortium	1997	$9,975
McAllen	TX	21,704	Urban	1	87	62	Academics 2000	1995	Each award provides $150,000/year for 5 years
							Academics 2000	1996	
							Academics 2000	1998	
NC Math-Science Consortium	NC	11,200	Rural Districts (4)	36	1	15-31	School Improvement	1995	$80,000
							Continuation	1996	$150,000
							Continuation	1997	$150,000
Wichita	KS	48,454	Urban	23	13	52	Local Education Reform	1994	$50,000
							Local Education Reform	1995	$94,424
							Local Education Reform	1996	$136,878
							Open Competition	1996	$143,000
							Local Education Reform	1997	$139,173
							Mini-grants	1997	$10,000
							Preservice/Prof. Dev.	1994-98	$100,000
							Technology	1998	$337,407

[1] Percentage of African-American Students
[2] Percentage of Hispanic Students
[3] Percentage of Students Who Qualify/Receive Free or Reduced-Price Lunches

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Data collection

Site visits

A two-person team conducted two- to three-day visits to each of the nine sites. Data collection included interviews and focus groups with key district- and school-level individuals involved in the reform effort and a document review of each subgrantee. Site visits were conducted between May and September of 1998 and included the following:

A. Individual interviews. Interviews were conducted with district administrators and other key individuals involved with the reform effort. The researchers interviewed each subgrantee's Goals 2000 coordinator, superintendent, and lead administrators in assessment, curriculum, and professional development and/or instruction. The interviews were semi-structured and loosely follow the protocols included in the Appendix. They were approximately 60 to 90 minutes in length and, generally, gathered information regarding the subgrantees' reform policies, practices and procedures. Because each subgrantee's reform efforts differed, the interview protocols were used as a framework which was customized to maximize data collection in different contexts.

In addition, based on recommendations from the local Goals 2000 coordinator or superintendent, the researchers interviewed other individuals who played key roles in the reform initiatives. Protocols for such individuals, including technology coordinators and community, business, and/or university representatives who participated in partnerships or other reform initiatives with the subgrantees, were constructed and used as needed. In sites where the subgrantees are composed of multiple districts, interviews were arranged with as many key actors as possible.

B. Focus groups. The researchers conducted one focus group with principals and one focus group with teachers at each site. The focus groups were approximately 60 minutes in length and provided information about school-level responses to district reform efforts. District or consortium personnel invited principals and teachers whose work best exemplified the subgrantee's reform efforts to participate in the focus groups.

C. Document review. The research team requested and received key documents related to the subgrantees' reform efforts prior to the site visits. These documents included the Goals 2000 plan, an organizational chart, and other significant documents related to reform prior to the site visit. The research team used these documents to identify persons to be interviewed and areas to be investigated during the interviews and focus groups. They were also used to aid in the customization of the protocols. Once on site, the research team asked for and received plans, reports, evaluations, and/or written descriptions of the reform effort from each person interviewed.

During and after the site visits, the research team read and catalogued all of the documents by site. The documents were used during data analysis.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed in two stages. First, the researchers reviewed the information from the interviews, focus groups, and documents and devised a general outline to guide the data analysis. The researchers then conducted an analysis of each subgrantee, highlighting effective practices, policies, and procedures that support improved teaching and learning, outcome data, the role played by the Goals 2000 and/or TLCF funds, and factors that facilitate and inhibit the successful planning and implementation of the reform effort. Second, the research team conducted a cross-site analysis that compared and contrasted the reform experiences of the nine subgrantees, examining the same categories highlighted in the analysis of the individual subgrantees.

III. Findings

This section describes the results of the cross-site analysis of policies, practices, and procedures of the nine promising Goals 2000 subgrantees. The findings are organized by research question.

1. What reform efforts have the subgrantees implemented to improve teaching and learning in their district(s)? How have Goals 2000 and/or TLCF funds started, supported, and/or sustained these efforts?

The subgrantees implemented several reform efforts to improve teaching and learning. The reform efforts included: (1) the adoption/creation/implementation of state and local standards and curricula; (2) the understanding, use, and development of assessments; (3) the provision of professional development and methods of instruction; and (4) the development of parental and community involvement programs. Goals 2000 subgrants either supported or sustained these efforts. The subgrants were often used by districts to create local standards and curricula, to create assessments, to provide professional development for teachers, principals, and other district personnel, and to provide seed money for other local reform initiatives.

Below we examine common characteristics of reform in the subgrantees studied and then provide brief descriptions of how Goals 2000 subgrants were used to support their reform efforts.

Common characteristics of reform efforts:

The findings revealed that the subgrantees' reform efforts share several common characteristics. These characteristics include the following:

- **The engagement of teachers and other district-level personnel in the creation of local standards, benchmarks, and curricula**. Usually this activity is considered a means of professional growth and is often referred to as professional development. Work in the adoption, creation, or alignment of standards and curricula deepens teachers' understanding of national, state and local expectations; provides teachers with a way to help shape the guiding principles of their work; engages teachers in collegial interaction and meaningful collaborative effort; and familiarizes teachers with the kinds of

instruction and assessments necessary to implement the standards/curriculum. Work in this area also promotes teacher "buy-in" to the reform effort and encourages all teachers to feel jointly responsible for helping students meet benchmarks at certain grade levels.

In Gresham-Barlow, a key component of the district's adoption of Oregon's standards was the creation of frameworks that aligned local curriculum with state standards. This process, which was undertaken by three committees of teachers and district administrators, familiarized the teachers with the state standards, and created instructional consistency throughout the district. Similarly, in the consortium of districts in North Carolina, participating mathematics teachers use curricula that introduces teachers to state and nationally recognized standards. And, in Las Cruces, the creation of interdisciplinary curricula aligned with standards was a collaborative effort which gave teachers input and ownership of their instructional program.

- **The use of assessment as the indicator of student growth and development and as the driver of instructional change**. Often viewed as an integral part of instruction, assessment provides vital information that curriculum writers, teachers, and principals need to improve instruction and identify student and teacher strengths and weaknesses. In Jersey City, for example, local exams are used as diagnostic tools. These tests, developed by teachers in the district, provide teachers and administrators with valuable information that is used to make decisions about changes in the curriculum and professional development activities. And, as discussed in the "Evidence of Success" section of this report, some of the districts studied – particularly Broward, Wichita, McAllen, and Gresham-Barlow – worked hard at enhancing the capacity of their staff to implement reform in assessment. In fact, Gresham-Barlow's reform effort centers around state-, local-, and school-level assessments that are aligned with the state standards and involve the use of performance-based assessments which require students to construct answers and/or to demonstrate understanding and skills through essays, projects, portfolios of their work, or other means. In Gresham-Barlow, according to administrators, this three-tier system is improving district monitoring of student progress and, with the aid of increased professional development, is changing teaching and learning in classrooms. In Wichita, administrators considered their district's use of teachers to create local exams in reading, writing, and math as professional development which helped participating teachers better understand and teach the types of material that their students are expected to learn.

- **The adoption of research-based methods of professional development that actively engage teachers in inservice activities that resemble their everyday work.** These inservice activities involve curriculum and assessment development, collaborative unit and lesson planning, the use of technology, and performance-based instruction and assessment. In several of the districts, teachers received stipends for their work during the summer for the first time. In Maine School Administrative District #27, Las Cruces, Gresham-Barlow, and other districts, administrators provided the opportunities for teachers to work together in grade-level groups and in K-12 clusters concentrating in various areas (for example, K-12 teachers in a district might meet to review the mathematics standards across grade levels). These professional in-depth, long-term

professional development opportunities reduced teacher isolation and increased teacher understanding of their work in the context of a K-12 system of education.

In addition, most of the districts studied, especially Broward, Kent County, and Maine School Administrative District #27, adopted the "trainer-of-trainers" model for professional development, in which lead teachers organize and conduct many of the districts' professional development activities. According to teachers interviewed, the lead teachers understood the complexities of teaching better than presenters who have not worked in classrooms for extended periods of time. The lead teachers, according to teachers interviewed, presented relevant research and information regarding standards, assessment, and instruction and did so in a coherent and cohesive manner.

In Jersey City, six Professional Development Schools, which operate similar to training hospitals, allow inservice and preservice teachers to observe state-of-the-art research-based teaching techniques in the context of a regular school environment. The district plans to make these schools an integral component of their professional development program.

Much of the professional development offered in the districts is ongoing. For example, teachers in the North Carolina Math-Science consortium receive training and followup sessions, as well as visits to their classrooms by a local professor to provide coaching in using the new curricula. In Jersey City, teachers who are identified by principals as needing help in instruction attend the district's Teacher Academy, which takes place for several weeks during the summer. Followup activities for these teachers include inservice sessions each month during the school year and informal coaching based on research from district staff development experts. Similarly, teachers in Gresham-Barlow and Maine School Administrative District #27 who work in teams designing and learning to score performance-based assessments meet on several occasions throughout the course of a semester to hone their skills and to report what does and does not work in their classrooms.

Finally, in accordance with best-practice research, all of the districts sought to provide quality professional development to all staff in the system, especially principals. Jersey City, for example, conducts an annual Administrator's Academy each summer to provide professional development for principals. In Wichita, everyone from district administrators to bus drivers received training in leadership and continuous improvement and in Las Cruces, a principal's academy trains school administrators in the instruction and assessment techniques being taught to teachers. Similar training occurs in most of the districts studied.

The development of positive relationships with the school community, including parents, businesses, government agencies, and community-based organizations. All of the districts recognize the significance of parental involvement. They include parents in strategic planning at the district level and mandate that they be included on school improvement teams. Districts typically communicate with parents through newspapers

and flyers, particularly about new standards, higher expectations, and different types of assessments. In Wichita, a parent center operates throughout the year, offering training to principals and administrators in how to work collaboratively with parents, and workshops for parents on how to support their children in school, including how to develop and implement schoolwide plans and activities. In Gresham-Barlow, parents are invited to schools for conferences in which students discuss their progress toward meeting state and local standards using portfolios of their work as a guide. However, while some of the districts have an aggressive parental involvement component, others leave parental involvement to the individual schools. In Las Cruces, for example, the district supports family involvement through the provision of highly qualified parent coordinators in each school. How the coordinators operate is dependent on the situation at each site.

All of the districts embrace partnerships with local businesses. Often these partnerships revolve around the development of standards and curricula, financial donations, and school-to-work related activities. In Las Cruces, the Doña Ana Workforce Council, a public-private partnership, worked with school officials to develop high school curricula and related internships for local high school students who participated in the school-to-work program. In Maine School Administrative District #27, an insurance company provided technical assistance which guided the district in formulating and implementing its reform effort. And in Kent County, Maryland, partnerships with local governmental agencies provide the funds to maintain the district's after-school and summer school programs.

- **The existence of additional characteristics.** Another set of common characteristics existed among the districts. These characteristics seemed to bind the multiple changes occurring in the districts together, creating a cohesive reform effort. They include:

  - A strong superintendent able to coalesce all stakeholders in the district around the goal of increased student achievement.

  - The implementation of an integrated system of standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessments, with assessment driving instructional change.

  - Reliance on research-based methods of professional development, family involvement, and school-change models to implement change. Often this involves enhancing the capacity of district personnel, particularly principals and teachers, to effect change while increasing their decision-making authority.

  - The encouragement of a systemwide movement toward performance-based instruction and assessment.

  - Reliance on a model of continuous improvement which supports risk-taking, constant growth and development, and high expectations for students and adults in the district.

- The provision and increased use of technology as both a management and instructional tool. Also included in this theme is the increased use of data – often broken out by school, classroom, individual student, and test item – to drive decisions about instructional focus.

Descriptions of Goals 2000 subgrants in the context of district reform:

The districts studied used Goals 2000 subgrants to fund essential elements of their overall reform efforts. Generally, the use of Goals 2000 funds fit seamlessly into the subgrantees' efforts to develop and implement standards-based reform.

In **Broward County, Florida**, an important aspect of the reform movement was an intervention program in elementary schools that were identified by the state as having "critically low" scores on several state assessments over a two-year period. As part of the program, which is called the Alliance of Quality Schools (AQS), a team of experts provided immediate intervention in each school in the areas of curriculum, instruction, classroom management, and parental involvement. The intervention included the implementation of a set curriculum which is linked to district goals to increase reading and math skills and the provision of a part-time coach, who works with teachers in implementing the curriculum and other aspects of the AQS program. According to district evaluations, the AQS program has proven successful. Students in the targeted schools increased their scores on state assessments and 24 of the 25 schools in Broward were removed from the "critically low-performing" list. Based on this success, and after a formal evaluation of the AQS program, the district decided to expand the AQS to the middle-school level. The district used Goals 2000 subgrants to support the interventions that are part of the AQS program. The district also used Goals 2000 subgrants to design an electronic lesson planning tool for the entire district, including schools that were identified as "critically low performing."

In Gresham, Oregon, the **Gresham-Barlow School District's** comprehensive standards-based assessment system plays a central role in the district's reform effort. A leadership team, composed of a cross-section of teachers with expertise in assessment, developed and piloted districtwide assessments in reading and mathematics. They also served as coaches across the district, helping teachers develop classroom-level assessments that require students to demonstrate what they have learned. The leadership team was supported by Goals 2000 subgrants. A collegial review process, in which teachers scored and discussed student work samples, was implemented at most schools. Goals 2000 funding provided substitutes and release time so that teachers could participate in the collegial reviews. The subgrants also supported teacher-directed research projects to help the teachers better understand and use classroom- and district-level performance-based assessments. A more recent Goals 2000 subgrant funded the development of a summer institute for elementary teachers and students. At the institute, teachers used inquiry-based instructional methods and assessments to teach science. District administrators contend that the district's overall efforts have resulted in increased test scores on state and local assessments.

The goal of the reform effort in the **Jersey City Public Schools** is to increase student achievement. A key component of the reform effort is increasing the capacity of teachers to implement the district curriculum, which is aligned with the state standards. District administrators believe that better instructional practices will lead to higher student achievement. The district created six professional development schools (PDSs), which administrators plan to use as the primary vehicles for the delivery of staff development that will improve instructional practices. PDSs are regular schools, with students, teachers and principals, that serve as exemplars of the types of learning communities that positively affect student achievement. The schools provide an effective learning environment for students, and a laboratory in which administrators, inservice teachers, and preservice teachers can observe and learn about research-based, state-of-the-art teaching techniques. Developed and run in partnership with a local university, the Jersey City PDSs seek to bridge the gap between professional development/preservice training and practice. The Goals 2000 subgrants that Jersey City Public Schools received from 1995 to 1998 were used to support the professional development schools, through training teachers, providing supplies, paying for substitutes for teachers who visit the schools, and providing stipends for PDS teachers. The subgrants were also used to ensure that every classroom has Internet access, and that all teachers receive training in how to incorporate technology into their teaching. Administrators are confident that the reform efforts are working, noting that in the past few years, dropout rates have declined, and fourth and eighth graders are surpassing state standards in mathematics, reading, and writing.

In **Kent County, Maryland**, a small rural district on Eastern Shore, the reform effort involved the development of local standards and assessments which are aligned with state standards; professional development in performance-based assessment and instruction; the increased use of computers and other technology as learning tools; and extended-day and extended-year programs. Goals 2000 subgrants supported district reform by providing funds to pay for substitutes while teachers participated in inservice training, to pay for consultants who conducted the computer training, and to pay for transportation of students, salaries of teachers, and other expenses related to developing and implementing an extended-day and extended-year program in the district. The district has also increased the size and scope of school media centers with a federal Technology Literacy Challenge Fund grant. Middle-school student achievement on state assessments is increasing in all subjects, accompanied by general increases in scores on local assessments. To sustain these efforts, the district has developed a partnership with a state juvenile crime prevention program to help support the extended-day program in some schools, and has developed a similar partnership with the local Parks and Recreation Department to help finance the extended-year program. As the district works to find local financial support for reform, the ability to reapply for grant funding has enabled it to build upon each year's activities and maintain momentum in its reform effort.

From 1995 to 1998, **Las Cruces Public Schools** concentrated its reform effort on curriculum development and implementation, the increased use of performance-based assessments, and the development of strong partnerships with student family members and school communities. The district has been revising its elementary school curriculum for the past ten years. The completed document is aligned with state standards, is interdisciplinary in scope, and includes units of study that involve the use of more higher-order skills, tasks, and projects than previous curricula used

in the district. In addition, the district provides professional development for teachers and principals in the use of alternative assessments, including portfolios, projects, and other demonstrations of skills and knowledge. At the same time, Las Cruces Public Schools developed a districtwide Instructional Council composed of teachers, administrators, local government agency representatives, and business leaders. The Council revised the district's strategic plan and monitored its implementation along with the implementation of the individual school improvement plans. The district provided initial Goals 2000 funds directly to individual schools, so that the schools could develop and implement their school improvement plans. The majority of the schools used the funds to purchase release time for teachers, so that they could (1) participate in school improvement, planning, and related implementation activities, (2) attend conferences and training sessions, and (3) align district curricula with state standards. The district also used its Goals 2000 funds to develop expertise among 22 teachers in school climate indicators, needs assessment techniques, facilitation tools and techniques, peer coaching and action research, and the school improvement planning process. These teachers then shared their expertise with colleagues.

Prior to receiving a Goals 2000 subgrant in 1996, **Maine School Administrative District #27**, in Fort Kent, a small rural district in northern Maine, did not have the resources to provide standards-related professional development on a districtwide basis. However, with the Goals 2000 subgrants, the district has supported the development of four lead teachers in instruction and curriculum development. They are systematically sharing their training and experience with peers in a trainer-of-trainers model of professional development. Much of the professional development in the district has focused on aligning local standards, curriculum, and assessments with the state standards. The lead teachers worked with K-12 teachers to establish benchmarks in each subject area. They also worked with teachers by grade-level to develop instructional units that are aligned with the state standards and local benchmarks. As a result of these professional development activities, the lead teachers report that teaching practices are improving in the district. Teachers are teaching thematically and using interdisciplinary units. In mathematics, they are using manipulatives and incorporating more problem-solving into their lessons. In other subjects, they are grouping students heterogeneously and employing cooperative learning techniques. According to the district superintendent, Goals 2000 subgrants provided the opportunity for the district to engage in its reform effort in a constant and consistent manner: without the funds, the pace of the district's reform effort would have been much slower.

The **McAllen Independent School District's** reform initiative, "Right from the Start," was designed to increase student achievement in prekindergarten through fourth grade by improving professional development and restructuring elementary education. The reform effort concentrates in four areas: curriculum development, professional development, use of research and student assessment data, and technology. McAllen's three Goals 2000 subgrants, or Academics 2000 subgrants as they are called in Texas, have been targeted toward the elementary level. Elementary schools that were rated exemplars by the state were paired with selected schools with low scores to policies and practices designed to improve instruction. Through Academics 2000, schools with prekindergarten through grade-2 received multimedia equipment and libraries for their classrooms. Each selected school received a multimedia cart, with a scanner, Quick-Take camera, VCR, and television for classroom use. Academics 2000 funds in the form of stipends

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were given to two instructors per grade level at the selected schools to attend professional development classes during the academic year. Teachers in selected schools were eligible for additional stipends to use towards professional development throughout the year. Th district offered a broad range of professional development topics, including the use of technology, interdisciplinary teaching, and project-based learning. Academics 2000 funds also encouraged the use of diagnostic assessments and the creation of assessments that are suited for elementary students in grades one and two. McAllen has seen an improvement in elementary student performance on the state's assessment measures. In addition to these increases, McAllen has had improvement in the upper grades and among limited-English proficiency students.

In rural northeastern North Carolina, five collaborating districts in the **North Carolina Math-Science Consortium** received a Goals 2000 consortium subgrant allowing them to address low test scores in mathematics at the middle-school level through curriculum reform. With the subgrant, the districts implemented Teach-Stat, a National Council of Teachers of Mathematics standards-based curriculum developed with National Science Foundation funding, and the Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment project, an international research effort supported by NSF and the Environmental Protection Agency. Both curricula focus on the collection, analysis, interpretation, and presentation of data that is relevant to students and their communities. Goals 2000 subgrants also provided training in technology, gender and ethnic awareness, and leadership development to support the new curricula. In addition, the subgrant supplied portable computers to lead teachers and Internet connections to school sites. According to the director of the consortium, the project has contributed to increased state and local test scores in mathematics among middle-school students. Furthermore, two of the participating districts joined with three other districts in the region to obtain a Local Systemic Change grant from the National Science Foundation for $1.1 million, insuring the continuity of the curriculum reform effort. Teachers participating in the program have shared the curricula, as well as their training and expertise, with their peers. The districts in the consortium have decided to use key elements of the curricula to also drive reform in mathematics at the elementary and high school levels.

The reform effort in **Wichita, Kansas**, focused on the development of local assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics. Goals 2000 subgrants supported the development of the assessments by funding release time and stipends for teachers and district administrators as they developed the assessments and participated in related professional development activities. The reform effort also focused on professional development for teachers in the use of the local curriculum and assessment measures and, for district- and school-level staff, in effective leadership. The professional development in effective leadership included a five-day districtwide workshop which emphasized teamwork and continuous improvement in the quality of services provided. This training was provided to between 2,500 and 3,000 district employees. In addition, the reform effort also focused on preservice training for college students working toward degrees in education. The district developed a professional development school in a low-income, Hispanic neighborhood to serve as a training site for preservice teachers. Goals 2000 subgrants supported this effort by providing stipends for teachers to engage in planning, for the purchase of instructional materials, and for increased use of project-based learning. The school has created a highly acclaimed bilingual education program (English/Spanish) and is developing new teachers

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through its relationship with a local university. At the professional development school, students' scores on statewide assessments have increased and overall, students' scores throughout the district are improving on statewide assessments, the Metropolitan Achievement Test, 7th Edition, and the ACT.

2. What evidence suggests that the reform effort has been successful? What challenges do districts confront in implementing standards-based reform?

Evidence of success:[1]

When asked about evidence indicating that their reform effort has been successful thus far, district administrators, principals, and teachers listed state and local assessment scores, principal observations of instructional practices, teacher evaluations of professional development activities, levels of parental involvement, school climate surveys, and teacher observations of student engagement. Some consider artifacts, such as K-12 curricula or a local assessment, as an indicator of success, while others consider teacher "buy-in" and teacher leadership activities as evidence of successful reform. They also included the quality and quantity of business and community partnerships that they have established as demonstrations of success.

The variety of indicators reveals the wide array of reform goals established by the districts. All of the districts reported that increased student achievement was a primary goal of the reform efforts. But, recognizing that reform efforts require extended time to have an effect, the districts also have implementation goals related to alignment of standards, curricula, assessment, and instruction and the involvement of families and communities in schooling. The variety of indicators of success reported by the subgrantees is the result of the district goals related to students outcomes, as well as the of implementation of reform.

Several indicators suggest that districts are beginning to achieve set goals. These indicators include increases in student achievement scores and evidence that cohesive standards-based systems are emerging, both of which were conditions for selection as a subject of study. Two other indicators were cited by most of the districts: evidence that districts are working to improve the educational outcomes of all students, and evidence that student assessment is driving reform activities.

- **Student achievement scores are increasing.** All of the subgrantees highlighted improvements in student performance on state assessments, generally in the areas where reform efforts (and Goals 2000 funds) were concentrated. For example, Broward focused on and improved the assessment scores in 24 of 25 "critically low" performing schools. Similarly, Kent County Public Schools concentrated its reform efforts at the middle-school level, and posted gains at that level in all subjects on the state assessment. And in

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[1] The following discussion of evidence of success should be understood in light of the fact that none of the nine subgrantees indicated that they had completed full-scale evaluations of their reform efforts. Consequently, what follows is preliminary in scope and involves a discussion of implementation of reform as well as end outcomes.

Wichita, academic achievement increased in grades 3, 4, 5, 7, and 9 in reading, writing, and mathematics, areas that were targeted by the reform effort. Other subgrantees posted similar gains.

While such increases are encouraging, it is important to note that many of the increases occurred during the general time frame in which reform efforts occurred, but only one of the districts (Broward County) conducted a formal evaluation to establish causality between certain aspects of the reform effort and increased student achievement. Identifying a time frame for the beginning of the reform effort (thus baseline data), understanding and documenting the extent to which reform reaches the classroom level, and utilizing the same assessment instruments long enough to gather trend data are challenges that make evaluating reform particularly difficult.

- **Cohesive systems are emerging.** In the nine subgrantees studied, state and local standards and benchmarks set districtwide expectations for student learning and district administrators, principals and teachers are working to make all components of their system revolve around the standards. Generally, the districts provide the leadership in this effort through the development and implementation of a strategic plan. Las Cruces' strategic plan included several systemic goals and details about individuals responsible for certain activities, timelines, and anticipated results. Maine School Administrative District #27 launched a massive professional development campaign in which teachers worked in subject-area and grade-level grouping to develop assessments, curricula, lessons, and activities based on the standards.

- **Districts are working to improve the educational outcomes of all students.** Subgrantees recognized their responsibilities to provide quality educational experiences to all students, including students with disabilities and students with limited-English proficiency (LEP). In Wichita and McAllen, anticipating state requirements to do so in a few years, administrators are testing most special education students using the same exam taken by regular education students and analyzing their scores to find weaknesses and ways to address them. In Jersey City, one of the six professional development schools is developing expertise in the inclusion of bilingual, LEP, and special education students in regular education classrooms. This expertise will be spread to teachers and administrators throughout the district through professional development sessions offered at the school. In addition, in Kent County and Las Cruces, the districts are promoting increased collaboration between general and special education teachers so that all teachers will be better prepared to teach local standards to all students.

The districts are also working to improve the educational outcomes of bilingual and LEP students. In Wichita, one of the magnet schools has a bilingual program that has attracted regional attention. In McAllen, which has a large percentage of LEP students, the bilingual education program has influenced all components of the school system. For example, most of the teachers in the system are bilingual, many teachers have bilingual licensing, and all home-school communications are written in English and Spanish.

- **Student assessment is a key element in reform activities.** Most of the subgrantees studied are developing and administering exams that include performance-based assessments, which require students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and to produce an answer rather than select a multiple-choice response. Such demonstrations can take the form of writing short essays, doing mathematical computations, or assembling a portfolio of representative work. Most of the assessments in states cited in this report include open-ended questions. In Florida, Kansas, New Mexico, Oregon, and Texas, state tests include a writing exam. Scores are often reported in terms of proficiency levels. Performance-based assessments are generally thought of as a more rigorous means of assessing progress in achieving the learning objectives set out in state and local standards.

  Because performance-based assessments are being used increasingly often in state and local exams, teachers in the districts studied are learning how to create and grade performance-based activities. This often involves using scoring guides which delineate expectations for work at different levels of proficiency. The use of this type of assessment fits well with state and local standards, benchmarks, and curricula, which usually require students to demonstrate mastery of advanced knowledge and skills. Teachers are being trained to use performance-based assessments in professional development in all of the districts studied, with intense efforts in Wichita, Maine School Administrative District #27, and Broward County. The increasing use of performance-based assessment, with its links to standards, curricula, instruction, and professional development, indicate that standards-based reforms are being implemented.

  In addition, the subgrantees indicated an increased use of assessment data as a diagnostic tool since their reform efforts began. In Wichita, a department called Quality Information Services prepares detailed breakdowns of state and local test score data for schools. The department also provides data and Excel worksheets for principals to use in identifying student strengths and weaknesses, developing schoolwide plans, and determining professional development needs for subject areas, grade-levels, and individual teachers. Similar departments exist in Broward, Gresham-Barlow, Las Cruces, and McAllen. In the smaller districts, such as the districts in the North Carolina Math-Science consortium, Kent County, and Maine School Administrative District #27, administrators and designated teachers recognize the benefits of and work toward using data in increasingly more sophisticated ways. In all of the districts studied, collecting and analyzing trend data was seen as highly important, but quite often, changing state assessments and evolving local assessments prohibited the collection of trend data.

Challenges to implementing standards-based reform:

The districts confront a number of challenges to the successful implementation of standards-based reform. These challenges concern teacher capacity to implement standards-based reform, changes in the education system necessary to carry out standards-based reform, and district capacity to manage and support standards-based reform.

A. Teacher capacity

All nine subgrantees cited the need for increased professional development to enhance school staff capacity as a major challenge. To make major changes in schools, teachers, principals, and other instructional staff need to increase their knowledge of and ability to use new approaches to teaching and learning. Teachers, in particular, require increased and improved staff development to support them in developing, understanding, and using new standards, curricula, instructional strategies, and assessment methods. To support teachers in this effort, principals need to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the key elements of reform. Professional development types that address these issues are costly and time-consuming, and present conflicts, particularly for teachers already charged with multiple responsibilities during and after the school day.

In most cases, districts have begun increasing teacher capacity by starting with a small group of teachers who become leaders in the reform effort. These "lead teachers" research reform strategies, receive intensive training, and go on to train colleagues (often principals, and sometimes district administrators as well). Lead teachers are often compensated for their additional work. The use of lead teachers was considered successful by the interviewees, though they noted that at times these teachers became overburdened.

Related to teacher capacity, interviewees also spoke of the need to increase teacher "buy-in," or willingness to participate in the reform effort. In most districts, lead teachers, principals, and district administrators spoke of small numbers of "recalcitrant" teachers, and larger numbers of "reluctant" teachers, who were not yet persuaded of the need to change curriculum, instruction, and assessment – or who were as yet unable to make those changes due to isolation, lack of training, and other factors. "Recalcitrant" and "reluctant" teachers were teachers who ignored the standards, were reluctant to give up "pet projects" they have used in their classrooms for years, or felt uncomfortable using performance-based instruction and assessment. **In general, "going to scale" – that is, helping <u>all</u> teachers increase their knowledge and change their practice – represents a significant challenge to nearly all of the subgrantees**.

To address teacher buy-in, most districts have opted to include groups of teachers in directing the reform efforts. Teachers are creating local benchmarks that are aligned with state standards. In addition, along with district administrators, and occasionally an outside consultant, teachers are also developing curricula and scoring locally developed assessments. Often these participants are lead teachers; in some cases, depending on the task and the district size, all teachers participate. Teachers who do not participate directly are usually asked to provide feedback on the benchmarks, assessments, and other products of reform. However, as mentioned, these additional responsibilities can contribute to teacher burnout. In one school system with many new assessment activities, some teachers left the district.

B. Changes in basic components of the educational system

Other challenges faced by these districts include making changes to basic components of the educational system. For example, some of the exemplary districts perceive the development and use of new methods of assessment, particularly to evaluate performance-based student work, as a challenge. Scoring reliability issues, and the additional time and training required of school staff, contribute to the difficulties districts have when changing assessment methods. Making the transition to standards-based instruction also poses challenges, especially in larger districts, as a district curriculum alone, without inservicing and in some cases accountability measures, does not typically change instruction. District officials in exemplary districts do not appear to be overwhelmed by these challenges, but they indicate that the tasks are time-consuming and difficult to accomplish. Many spoke of the value of patience and the need to give the district adequate time to make these major changes before rushing to conclusions about the appropriateness of the changes.

A significant educational challenge cited by the interviewees, particularly by teachers, is the need for the district to determine how to best serve the needs of all students. A number of concerns related to this issue were expressed. In some cases, interviewees expressed concern about special-education students who may have to overcome greater academic obstacles to achieve the high standards set by the district and/or state. In other cases, interviewees expressed concerns about what will happen to students who fail to achieve certain benchmarks set either by the state or the district. The need to establish a fair and workable district policy for dealing with such students was considered a challenge in some of the exemplary districts. Interviewees in certain districts pointed out that a shift in attitudes among instructional staff will have to occur for staff to perceive both special-education and low-achieving students as capable of achieving these standards. Furthermore, interviewees spoke of the necessity for more intensive, and more well-differentiated, educational strategies – as part of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development – to help them meet these students needs.

C. District capacity

Finally, district leadership is challenged to sustain the momentum for reform. In some districts, significant change in content areas such as language arts, mathematics, and/or science has already been accomplished. These changes required a great deal of work from teachers, community members, and others. However, district officials acknowledge that other subject areas, such as art and social studies, will require similar attention. Resources, especially for professional development, are scarce in many districts, and winning private grants is becoming increasing difficult.

Another challenge to district reform is the lack of time for broad-based planning and implementation of new policies and practices. Many district and school-level officials indicated that they will need to find ways of giving more time to teachers and/or administrators to plan and implement collaborative reform strategies that cut across grades and/or schools to lead to true systemic reform. To sustain the momentum and capacity for change, more resources will be required.

Districts and their reform efforts also face potential instability with transitions in leadership. Such transitions were underway in four of the nine subgrantees in this study. However, at all of these sites, district- and school-level officials expressed confidence that the progress already made by the subgrantee had been recognized and appreciated, and that the current vision would continue to inform the leadership of incoming officials.

3. How and to what extent do these subgrantees coordinate Goals 2000 and/or TLCF funds and other federal program funds to promote reform, particularly standards-based reform?

Coordination of Funds for Reform Efforts:

The flexible nature of the Goals 2000 program enables districts to spend the funds on their priorities as outlined in their strategic plans. Some districts use a strategic budgeting process that identifies and prioritizes all of the district's programs and initiatives as well as funding sources. They then make decisions about spending based on their priorities and the availability of funding.

Many of the districts reported an increase in blended funding in the last few years. Some of the districts submit consolidated applications for federal programs while others are moving in that direction. Because Goals 2000 subgrants are so flexible, they add to the overall capacity of these districts and other districts to fund programs that support their strategic plans. In several districts studied here, Goals 2000 funds were used to make a wide variety of reform activities cohere.

The Goals 2000 funds are most often blended with monies from the Eisenhower Professional Development Program, a federal program that supports professional development in mathematics, science, and other areas, and with federal, state, and local funds for the purchase of computers and other technological equipment. At least one of the districts also used Technology Literacy Challenge Fund grants (federal grants designed to support districts and schools in the purchase and use of technology in classrooms) in combination with Goals 2000 and other federal funds to improve the learning environment through better resources and instruction. Similar to Title I funds that support whole-school reform efforts, Goals 2000 subgrants are usually combined with other federal, state, and local funding to support reform activities designed to support all students in a school or district. Because they are non-categorical, the Goals 2000 subgrants often provide critical resources that districts use to shape their reform efforts to local contexts.

4. What do these case studies tell policymakers about the planning and implementation of successful programs? About technical assistance improvement strategies?

Issues and Implications for Policymakers:

Seven broad issues emerge from a review of the case-study data. Each issue is summarized below, followed by a description of the issue's implications for policymakers.

i. **Districts play a significant role in directing the overall implementation of systemic standards-based reform**. First, the districts have all set priorities related to increasing

academic performance. Second, the districts are aligning their entire systems around state standards and assessments and providing activities for teachers and principals to help them understand and implement systemic change. These activities include aligning local standards; developing, aligning, and mapping curriculum; creating local assessments; and sponsoring professional development in performance-based instruction and assessment. Third, recognizing that in education, the unit of change is the school, most of the districts are heavily decentralized and encourage decision-making at the school level. Consequently, in their efforts to implement systemic standards-based reform, the districts are setting goals, increasing the capacity of the adults in the district to meet those goals, and then allowing the schools to determine the best ways to do so.

The nine subgrantees provide examples of particularly successful district leadership. Many other districts across the country are attempting to achieve similar results, but they face a wide variety of challenges. **To facilitate their success, policymakers may want to consider how to increase or enhance technical assistance that focuses on the development of leadership**, as well as education reform strategies driven by student academic performance (performance-based reform), the development and implementation strategies for systemic standards-based reform, and district- and school-level management issues. **District leaders – including school-level staff when appropriate – also need opportunities to meet with other district leaders to share the lessons they have learned from their reform efforts**. Meetings between rural and urban district leaders, and between leaders of a group of urban districts, were particularly helpful to the subgrantees.

ii. **Superintendents and other district leaders who emphasize curriculum and instruction are able to provide and support a coherent vision for standards-based reform**. These leaders tend to support the implementation of that vision in ways likely to be successful. Many district and school staff indicated that the vision articulated by their current district leadership was more focused on curriculum and instruction than the vision of previous leaders. This focus supported a number of beliefs common to districts: (1) the acknowledgment that standards-based reform is successful only if change occurs in the classroom; (2) the commitment to supporting school-level staff through increased professional development, among other methods; and (3) the sense that all district and school staff are "on the same page," united in their effort to improve student achievement.

District leaders, such as superintendents and assistant superintendents, need support in understanding how to foster curricular and instructional reform. Different venues, such as state or regional conferences and university-sponsored forums, could be used to facilitate the staff development of district personnel. Additionally, through funding applications, policymakers could encourage district leaders to articulate visions of reform that involve curriculum and instruction. Policymakers could also explore ways to promote an understanding of effective instructional leadership in the context of standards-based reform by superintendents-in-training.

iii. **Districts need flexible funding to implement locally developed systemic standards-based reform.** The availability of Goals 2000 and Technology Literacy Challenge Fund monies were key to the districts' reform efforts. Most of the districts studied indicated that funding reform efforts is difficult because a large percentage of their budgets are earmarked for salaries and categorical spending. The availability of non-categorical additional funds gave the districts the opportunities to implement their reform plans. Some of the districts said that they already had reform efforts underway and the Goals 2000 funding enabled them to implement their plans at a quicker pace. Others indicated that the Goals 2000 funding gave them the opportunity to "dream" and without the Goals 2000 funding, their reform efforts would be stalled, if not non-existent.

Flexible grant programs that award subgrants to districts address an important need. Policymakers may want to review these programs regularly to ensure that they are sufficiently flexible to allow districts to make decisions about how to best implement systemic standards-based reform. Where helpful, districts can be encouraged to plan and implement Goals 2000 and other federal and state programs in a coordinated fashion.

iv. **Successful districts implement research-based reform efforts**. While each of the districts studied address reform in different ways, most of them were aware of "best practices" research and made decisions based on relevant findings. A few of the districts required position papers detailing evidence of success before programs were adopted. Some required that schools adopt only those school reform programs endorsed by the U.S. Department of Education. The research-orientation of the districts was evident in their methods of delivering professional development, focus on performance-based instruction and assessment, approaches to family and community involvement programs, uses of technology, and emphasis on understanding change, especially teacher change. Several of the superintendents and district administrators spoke of different change models, and many of the teachers and principals are involved in professional reading circles. Further, there was increased effort in these districts to analyze and make decisions based on student performance data.

Policymakers may want to explore a variety of ways to encourage the use of research and research-based methods for planning, implementing, and supporting standards-based reform. The process of applying for federal education funds could be based on the implementation of research-based methods, for example. The process of reporting the results of activities supported by those funds could be based on student performance data to demonstrate results.

v. **Some of the districts studied use strong evaluation methods to assess their progress in implementing standards-based reform.** Most of the districts used student performance data to inform the planning and implementation of reform efforts. This data comes from multiple sources, including classroom-, district-, and state-level tests. In some cases, the data is disaggregated by student characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and family income. In most districts, assessment coordinators work directly with district

leaders to establish and monitor achievement. Some of the larger districts maintain entire offices to assist in designing, administering, and scoring tests as well as analyzing, disaggregating, and interpreting the results. Data is provided, often at the individual student, classroom, school, and district levels, to district and school staff and to parents and community members. In addition to test data, districts conduct regular needs assessments for specific purposes such as identifying professional development topics and technology needs. Furthermore, these districts assess the satisfaction of a variety of stakeholders, including parents, local business representatives, paraprofessionals, and students. However, in most districts, this data was not used to evaluate their reform efforts.

To evaluate their progress in implementing standards-based reform, districts need technical assistance in evaluation of standards-based reform. Policymakers may want to consider ways to encourage districts to allocate the financial resources necessary to train staff and conduct adequate evaluations of their reform efforts.

vi. **Successful districts address gaps in educational outcomes by targeting additional resources to schools in which students are not demonstrating adequate academic progress**. Additional resources include increased discretionary funding and increased funding for specialized personnel, extra programs, and technological equipment. Many of the promising districts provide special programs, such as mentoring, tutoring, after-school enrichment, etc.; better linkages to social service agencies; and concentrated expertise from the district administrators in low-performing schools. In Wichita, a low-performing school in a low-income area of the city was converted into a professional development school. While teachers are being trained, students benefit from the innovative ideas, expert instruction, and low student-teacher ratios at the school. Similarly, in Broward, teams of district experts worked low-performing schools to help school administrators make changes in school organization, curriculum, and instruction that ultimately improved student performance.

Policymakers may want to encourage the dissemination of district-level "best practices" for addressing gaps in student performance. These "best practices" could include policies that encourage the use of addition resources in low-performing schools.

vii. **Successful reform requires that teacher work must change**. The districts in the study are requiring that teachers adopt performance-based instruction and assessment. Understanding and actually employing these new teaching methods represents a significant change in the profession and will take considerable time to realize fully. The teachers interviewed are early adherents and acknowledge that many of their peers are only in the recognition stage of the change process. Most of the districts are cognizant of the magnitude of change being requested and have engaged teachers in activities designed to familiarize them with performance-based instruction and suggest methods of incorporating the new strategies into their teaching. New forms of professional development, schoolwide accountability measures, and increased emphasis on how individual teachers fit into the K-12 system of education also require that teachers

collaborate more with one another and with principals.

Technical assistance and networking efforts are particularly helpful when they focus on supporting districts in "going to scale" with new teaching and assessment methods. These efforts include teacher dialogue and collaboration between and across grade levels, as well as inter-school sharing. These methods promote reform throughout the system by diminishing teachers' isolation.

IV. Case Studies

The following section includes case studies of the nine promising subgrantees. Each case study is based on interviews with the superintendent and with district administrators knowledgeable about the district's reform effort. Unless otherwise noted, statements in the case studies reflect the consensus of the interviewees or the collective understanding of the researchers.

Each case study is divided into six to eight sections. The first section, "Student Outcomes," describes positive gains in student achievement in the district. The second section, "Standards and Curriculum," discusses the development, adoption, alignment, and dissemination of district standards and curricula. The third section, "Assessment," reports on the district's assessment policies and procedures, and the fourth section, "Professional Development," discusses the district's approach to professional development and district programs designed to increase the capacity of its staff to implement standards-based reforms. The fifth section, "Reform at the School Level," reports on the impact of reform at the school level. The final section, "Overall Successes and Challenges," summarizes the district's progress.

Some of the case studies also include sections on technology or other areas of focus in the district. At the end of each case study is a table that describes the Goals 2000 subgrants received by the district and the manner in which the funds were spent.

BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS is the second largest school district in Florida and the fifth largest district in the nation. It serves 230,552 students in 201 schools with 12,000 teachers. The student population is diverse, with 44 percent white, 36 percent African American, and 16 percent Hispanic. Thirty-nine percent of the district's students qualify for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program, and eight percent of the population are limited-English proficient (LEP) students. Located in the Fort Lauderdale area, the district has a $2.2 billion budget and grows by 7,000 to 10,000 students each year.

The Broward County school superintendent, other district administrators, principals, and teachers interviewed described three philosophical beliefs that are basic to district reform effort. First, they stressed the idea that all children can learn, but not all in the same way or at the same pace. This belief places the responsibility for student learning solidly on the shoulders of the school system. Such accountability is reinforced by a district policy that links student academic achievement to performance evaluations and salary increases. Second, interviewees agreed on "unequal resources for unequal needs." This belief is operationalized through a district formula for distributing funds that provides a greater share of the available resources to schools in poorer sectors of the district or that have lower assessment scores. Third, interviewees emphasized that in order to effect change, the district must act in a manner that will continue beyond the tenure of individuals.

To reinforce its philosophy, the district has instituted several key policies that are the cornerstones of the reform effort. Perhaps the most important policy and the framework of the reform effort is the district's Accountability Policy. Adopted by the school board in 1995, this policy established a system for school improvement which includes the formation of School Advisory Councils (SACs) and the development of school improvement plans. The SAC – a team composed of principals, union representatives, teachers, as well as parents, community members, students, and other stakeholders – develops, implements, and monitors the school improvement plan. The plan must identify objectives that are specific, measurable, and attainable in a three- to five-year period. The plan must also include benchmarks as well as action steps that involve parental involvement and technology components. All plans must include an evaluation component that involves the use of baseline data.

The Accountability Policy also identifies criteria by which schools are labeled as making recognized progress, acceptable progress, or needing to improve. Broward's indicators of progress were formulated with input from school personnel, community leaders, and the business sector. They include measures of annual and multi-year progress in areas such as student achievement, dropout and graduation rates, student and teacher attendance, partnerships, and student behavior. District administrators noted that the state read and adopted aspects of the Broward County policy for identifying schools.

In addition to the Accountability policy, the district adopted three other policies. The Standards of Service policy outlines the district-developed standards, core competencies, performance indicators, foundation skills, and benchmarks for each grade level. The Standards of Practice policy, also known as Professional Pathways, establishes a process for identifying and meeting adult learning needs. The Standards of Student Services policy outlines a support system for students and families that utilizes internal and external social services.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Academic achievement in Broward County Public Schools has increased during the period of reform. In 1995, 25 Broward County schools (13 percent of the district's 195 schools) were identified by the state as "critically low-performing," based on school performance on state reading, mathematics, and writing assessments over a two-year period. Through a district intervention program called the Alliance of Quality Schools, student scores in 24 of the 25 critically low-performing schools increased so that by 1997, only two schools (one, a school that recently opened) were considered "critically low-performing," and none are so classified in 1998. A positive domino effect occurred causing many of the schools in Broward to move one level up in the state's classification system.[2] There were 51 schools classified as level four in 1995. By 1997, 77 schools were classified at this level.

Other positive evidence includes gains on the Florida Writing Assessment, an increase in Stanford Achievement Test, 8th Edition, mathematics scores at grade 3 in the past two years, and an overall increase between 1990 and 1996 in the number of students taking Advanced Placement (AP) exams. In 1996, 57.2 percent of Broward County AP students pass the AP exams versus 52.8 percent in the state of Florida. And since the Accountability Policy was implemented, the district has seen a thirty-percent increase in the number of students reading at grade level, and a twenty-percent increase in the number of students who are writing proficiently at the elementary level. In addition to increasing test scores, the district has seen an increase in grade-point averages (GPAs). The state and district increased the GPA graduation standard from 1.5 to 2.0 for the class of 2000. From 1995-96 to 1996-97, the district reported a 16.3 percent increase in first-time ninth-graders with a GPA of 2.0 or higher. Additionally, there has been an 18.4 percent decrease in students with a GPA of less than 2.0 and a 24.1 percent decrease in students with a GPA of less than 1.5. Similarly, three-year trend data from 1993-94 to 1995-96 indicate that graduation rates in Broward are increasing.

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[2] Schools receiving six low scores over a two-year period on state assessments are labeled "critically low-performing," level one, by the state. Schools that have four or five low scores are considered approaching critical status and are classified as "warned," level two. Schools with three, two, or one low score(s) are considered in level three and those schools with no low scores are included in level four.

STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM

The district has developed local core curriculum competencies and performance indicators that are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards. The core curriculum competencies identify fifteen areas – such as interpersonal abilities, technology and communication, and thinking and reasoning skills – considered important for students to learn. The district also developed performance indicators in reading, writing, and mathematics for each grade level that together clearly define what students will know and be able to do. Furthermore, the district delineated foundation skills in reading, writing, listening, speaking, and mathematics, and benchmarks for each grade level.

The standards, which are included in the Broward County Curriculum, are the foundation of the district's reform effort. Educational materials, including books, equipment, and supplies, either currently support the implementation of standards-based instruction or will be replaced with materials that are appropriate over time, according to the director of secondary education. The standards were disseminated to teachers and principals through the leaders of small clusters of schools in a common geographic area, or Innovation Zones. (Usually a high school and its feeder schools constitute an Innovation Zone.) The district has and continues to provide professional development to teachers and principals to aid in their ability to reinforce standards-driven instruction and assessment.

Several of the district's Goals 2000 subgrants were used to disseminate and encourage the use of standards. For example, one subgrant supported four teachers, called lead teachers, who introduced the standards, and best practices in how to teach them, to other teachers in the district via distance learning. The subgrant also supported the development and dissemination of Instructional Unit Plans, which provided teachers with examples of activities and lesson plans that could be used in teaching standards. In addition to these Instructional Unit Plans, lead teachers are now piloting a new electronic planning tool. The tool, a compact disc, provides formats for the development of unit plans and includes district and state standards and benchmarks and lists of activities that can be used for planning lessons that address the skills and performances outlined for each standard.

A Goals 2000 subgrant supported the development and initial implementation of the Alliance of Quality Schools, a comprehensive school intervention program focusing on reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, behavior, and parent involvement. This program is designed to meet the needs of elementary schools that had been identified by the state as critically low-performing. As part of the Alliance intervention, a team of experts was dispatched to each critically low-performing school. The team offered and continues to offer immediate intervention in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and classroom management. All Alliance schools use a set curriculum that is accessible to teachers on a laser-video disk. Using this curriculum, students are constantly assessed and regrouped according to increases in their abilities. The parental involvement aspect of the Alliance seeks to improve the basic skills of parents and students. It involves the use of the Parent and Child Education (PACE) model of family involvement for preschool students, which includes early childhood education, adult literacy training, parent time, and at-home instruction. The model also includes weekly home visits and monthly parent group meetings. With increased

test scores among students in 24 of the 25 critically low-performing schools, the district has decided to expand the Alliance of Quality Schools to the middle-school level.

Assessment

In addition to regular classroom assessments, Broward County students take a series of local and state assessments. At the state level, students are given the Florida Writing Assessment (grades 4, 8, and 10), Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, or FCAT (grades 4, 5, 8, and 10), and the High School Competency Test (must be passed by grade 11 to graduate).

Locally, the district gives the Stanford Achievement Test, 8th Edition (grades 2-9), end-of-course tests in secondary schools for use on a voluntary basis (developed based on the FCAT and piloted this year), and literacy folders. The folders travel with students through middle school and contain a record of the skills that students have mastered over the course of each year. Literacy folders are used to assess reading and writing through reading tests and writing samples reviewed in October and May of each year.

Local and state assessments are intricately linked. The local assessments are designed to measure student abilities at strategic checkpoints, in preparation for state administered exams. In addition, as indicated, the end-of-course exams, which were developed by district curriculum specialists and teachers, were written in the same format as the FCAT. The exams include multiple-choice, short-answer, guided-response, and extended-response items. The director of secondary education believes that the use of these exams will encourage teachers to create similar classroom assessments. In addition, district administrators and principals agree that the Florida Writing Assessment has been an impetus for teacher change.

The district is also moving toward a model of performance-based assessment, in which students demonstrate mastery of material through project-like activities. (Officials estimate that at this time 25 percent of teachers are using performance-based assessments consistently.) The Standards of Service, which outline district standards, include assessments using performance indicators. District administrators are pleased with the steady growth of teachers who have the ability to create and administer performance-based assessments. Performance-based and more traditional assessments are used to identify areas of strength and weakness in students and teachers. Assessment data is used by the state and the district to identify high- and critically-low performing schools. Also, the district accountability policy requires that school bonuses and teacher and principal evaluations be based in part on student assessment data.

Principals find assessment and trend data helpful. They concentrate on this data both at the school and individual teacher levels, using the assessment data from the district to make decisions regarding teaching assignments, scheduling of courses, and curricular decisions. Assessment data is also used to determine the special needs of students and to better communicate with parents. This past year, the district instituted an Accountability Implementation Project designed to provide all schools with access to the kinds of student

performance information they need to support instruction and planning. This data is available through desktop computers utilizing query-type software.

Over the past two years, district staff have analyzed the results of the second-grade Stanford Achievement Test, 8th Edition, scores. In the past, students below the third grade were not administered standardized tests. But district officials feel that monitoring growth and development at early levels benefits district, school, and classroom decisionmaking.

Professional Development

The district stresses the importance of professional development for all adults in the system. The Standards of Practice, also known as Professional Pathways, identifies a process for the assessment and analysis of adult learning needs, a system for selection of research-based professional development opportunities, a system of continuous evaluation of professional development, and the development of adult learning plans. Through the implementation of the Standards of Practice, the district has established a research-based, results-oriented system of professional development that focuses on student achievement.

The Human Resources Department is responsible for 13 percent of the training in the district. Operating with a budget of $4 million, it delivers professional development to teachers, primarily through Innovation Zone coaches. (Innovation Zones are clusters of schools, usually a high school and its feeder schools, that work together to identify and meet student academic and social needs.) Delivered through the zones, the professional development is long-term (often has multiple sessions), encourages the development of learning communities, and usually includes followup activities. The district also has a professional development school, the Nova Center. Currently in its second year of operation, the Nova Center concentrates on developing new teachers in collaboration with local universities. The Nova Center is also a place where teachers in the district can go to view effective practices. The district has included distance learning in its professional development efforts, and delivers training to teachers grouped by grade-level K-12 and subject matter. Through a Goals 2000 subgrant, the district has also developed an electronic training tool to help teachers in developing and assessing lesson plans aligned with standards. In addition, the district created a professional development opportunity by using teachers to develop and score end of course exams.

Encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their professional development, the district requires that teachers and principals include a professional development plan as part of the goals that they set for themselves each year. The primary topics of professional development are standards-based instruction and the use of alternative assessments. Schools participating in the Alliance of Quality Schools have additional support through part-time coaches. A program seeded by Goals 2000 funds, the Alliance of Quality Schools works to increase the academic achievement of students through intensive school reform, including changing pedagogical practices through the provision of intensive professional development and followup sessions. The followup sessions are run by coaches who work in the schools for 20 hours each week observing and modeling instruction.

Another Goals 2000 subgrant – the Professional Development Distance Learning Technology Subgrant – eventually led to the reorganization of professional development delivery throughout the district. This subgrant funded four lead teachers, known as Teachers-on-Task, to become experts in standards-based instruction and to develop lesson plans and activities aligned with the standards. The Teachers-on-Task then shared their expertise. They conducted workshops and distance-learning sessions on best practices and integrating technology into lesson plans, with more than 600 teachers attending these activities. The Teachers-on-Task also coached teachers during the school day, acted as teacher resources, and responded to principals' requests to support individual teachers in different areas. As a result of principals' requests, the district decided to fund Teachers-on-Task (now called zone coaches) for each of the 23 zones.

The district recognizes that the professional development of principals is also important. Principals receive professional development in areas such as management, instruction, data analysis, and creating and writing school improvement plans. They also receive detailed instruction in how to interpret assessment data, with particular emphasis on information related to trends in student achievement. District administrators noted that training in data analysis done in conjunction with instruction and curriculum training seems most effective.

Reform at the School Level

According to principals and classroom teachers, schools are changing in response to the reform effort. The principals indicated that school improvement plans are the blueprints for change in their schools. Schools have the opportunity to respond to the critiques of three district administrators before they submit their plans to the district.

Other than reviewing school plans, the district takes a hands-off approach to school initiatives, holding principals primarily responsible for student learning. (The exception occurs in critically low-performing schools, which are discussed below.) The principals said that the district is heavily committed to site-based management and has removed many bureaucratic barriers that blocked school change. The district encourages principals to experiment with research-based programs, changes in course scheduling, and school emphasis. School personnel indicated that the district supports them through the provision of resources, such as zone coaches and other professional development opportunities, instructional technology and other instructional materials, and assessment data to guide instructional decision-making.

Principals indicated that they are held more accountable for student achievement than in the past. They approve of this arrangement and reported that, though resources are always sparse, the district provides a good deal of support in helping them meet their schoolwide objectives. Through consistent leadership and support, principals said that they are better able to do their jobs.

Schools identified as low performing have developed important family involvement programs that involve parents in their children's education. Through the incorporation of already established programs such as Even Start, Head Start, and Home Instructional Program for

Preschool youngsters (HIPPY), the schools seek to improve the basic skills and attitudes of parents and their preschool children. Many of the schools use the Parent and Child Education model, which includes early childhood education, adult literacy and parenting training, and at-home instruction, as well as regular home visits and parent group meetings.

Several other changes in the schools have occurred, all designed to increase student academic achievement. The principals and teachers indicated that the creation of the Innovation Zones is having a large effect on teacher growth and development, as well as on curricular decisions. The Innovation Zones have started a dialogue between K-12 teachers, which the teachers consider invaluable. They indicated that this dialogue, which includes the process of mapping out all curriculum topics across grade levels, helped them see where they "fit in" in terms of their students' educational careers. Teachers appreciate the ability to see and understand what students should know before they come to their classes and how what students learn in their classes is built upon in successive years. In helping teachers recognize their individual roles in the context of a larger system of education, the zones increase teachers' collective responsibility for all students.

Principals and teachers also reported that scheduling in their schools has changed greatly in response to reform. They recognized the need for increased instructional time and responded in numerous ways. Some schools moved to block scheduling, others are team teaching. Some employ "4 by 4" scheduling in which students take four courses, four days a week, with the fifth day devoted to tutorials. Still others have moved to looping, which involves having students stay with one teacher over the course of several years. In addition, schools are offering extended-day programs, summer school, and Saturday schools.

Other changes include new uses of student performance data. School Advisory Councils assess school climate and use student test data to set school goals and make recommendations about curricular emphasis. Principals and teachers use student assessment data to set goals for themselves and their students as part of their evaluation process. Finally, schools use assessment data to evaluate school progress.

Teaching practices are changing in the district. In earlier years, according to the lead teachers, textbooks dictated curriculum and instruction. Now, teachers are beginning to change strategies. They are using performance-based instruction and assessment more and are less didactic in their teaching. One administrator estimated that 25 percent of the teachers are now using some form of performance-based assessment. Equally significant, administrators said that teachers are collaborating more, giving pre and post-tests, and teaching reading and writing across the curriculum. Professional development, funded through Goals 2000 subgrants, has supported teachers as they transition into new ways of working in schools.

Implementation of the district's technology plan has led to modified designs for all new schools and the new plans for all schools being renovated to include the appropriate technology infrastructure. In the past year, the district has also retrofitted 55 of its 201 schools to make 3,411 classrooms capable of supporting integrated workstations. It also purchased and installed 14,651 workstations for students, teachers, and school administrative staff.

Overall Successes and Challenges

Broward County emphasizes the use of state and local standards as the foundation for reform in the district and put into place a series of detailed policies to support – over the long term – the alignment of many components of the system with the standards. These policies created a multifaceted reform effort that supports site-based management. The Accountability Policy, for example, changed the climate in the district by compelling principals and instructional staff to more closely analyze student test scores and make school improvement plans that address weaknesses. Principals told us that the Accountability Policy – particularly the public reporting of data – and the superintendent's strong leadership made the reform effort "real" for them. According to the superintendent, encouraging experimentation and increasing accountability at the school level is paying off in increased student achievement.

The district introduced two successful methods of delivering professional development and communicating across schools: distance-learning and the use of lead teachers in "Innovation Zones" (i.e., communities of schools). Administrators and lead teachers said that these are convenient and efficient methods for disseminating intensive professional development and other information to large numbers of teachers. District administrators value the initiative, leadership, and professional growth fostered by the lead-teacher concept, and report positive changes in their schools. Teachers reported that distance-learning sessions made district-wide professional development easier to attend, though they are still becoming accustomed to the technology.

The district has also been successful in increasing the use of data at the school level. Teachers, principals, and district administrators are employing assessment data to better target students' learning needs and better prepare all teachers for increased use of standards-based instruction and assessment. Many of the principals spoke about their increased use of data-driven decision-making around professional development and school academic emphases.

One of the biggest challenges to Broward County's reform effort is to increase the number of teachers who are willing to make changes in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The district is promoting buy-in through incentives, increased professional development, and new teacher evaluation policies. District administrators realize that this is a long-term effort but feel that they are on the right track.

Another important challenge in Broward County is helping the school community to recognize that current assessments do not provide a full picture of student achievement, and that performance-based assessments allow teachers to better understand what students know and are able to do. The district is attempting to convey this message through continued communication with the school community, particularly with parents. The creation of the standards-based report card, which reflects student mastery of various standards and also includes traditional letter grades, is one example of the district's efforts in this area.

Administrators in Broward County are confident that the reforms being put into place will be institutionalized. Through creating policies approved by the school board, the superintendent anticipates that the reforms will continue to be implemented, even when the current administration is no longer there.

GOALS 2000 SUBGRANTS

Grant name	Grant amount	Year	Emphasis
Goals 2000 Preservice/Inservice Urban Professional Development Grant	$237,550	1996-1997	Used to create an urban professional development complex in cooperation with several other organizations, including the Teacher Education Alliance, Broward Community College, and Florida Atlantic University, and educational associations.
Goals 2000: Local Education Reform Grant Program: Critically Low-Performing Schools	$650,000	1996-1997	Designed to identify critically low-performing schools, using criteria developed in Broward, and to develop and implement individual school improvement programs.
Goals 2000: Broward Electronic Curriculum Planning Tool - Sunshine Standards and Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test	$270,000	1997-1998	Used to develop replicable training models of best practices in curriculum, instruction, and curriculum alignment; to create an electronic planning tool to aide in the development of aligned activities and lesson plans.
Goals 2000: Local Education Reform Grant Program - Dillard Innovation Zone	$150,000	1997-1998	Used by teams from a cluster of schools (referred to as "Innovation Zones" and inclusive of a high school and its feeder schools) to develop and implement a systemic approach to changing the educational environment within the zone.
Goals 2000: Professional Development Distance Learning Technology Grant Project.	$440,000	1997-1998	Paid the salaries of four "Teachers-on-Task" who developed Unit Plans (activities and lessons) aligned with the state and local standards, and coached in four pilot Innovation Zones.
Goals 2000: Secondary Techniques Accelerate Reading (STAR) Project	$235,000	1998-1999	Used to combine the expertise of Broward County reading specialists with Florida International University (FIU) professors to develop and implement a model professional development program in reading.

GRESHAM-BARLOW SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 10JT

GRESHAM-BARLOW SCHOOL DISTRICT is located in Gresham, Oregon, seventeen miles east of Portland. The district serves approximately 11,000 students, of whom 92 percent are white, 3 percent are Hispanic, 3 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander, and 1 percent are African American. Twenty-one percent of the students receive free or reduced-price lunches. Six hundred teachers work in the district's ten elementary schools, five middle schools, two high schools, and one alternative school. With 79,000 residents, Gresham is Oregon's fourth largest city. In 1994, Gresham and the three small communities of Boring, Damascus, and Orient consolidated into a single school district that operates on an annual budget of nearly $58 million.

In 1995, when this reform effort began, the superintendent exercised a fairly top-down style of leadership. With the school board's cooperation, he reduced the district's list of 35 goals to 3, to be achieved in a one- to three-year time period. These goals are: to develop higher, more clearly defined standards of achievement and performance that are aligned with the state standards; to increase student achievement on district- and state-developed assessment measures; and to maintain fiscal responsibility. Much of the promise in Gresham-Barlow's implementation of standards appears to be driven by the district's use of performance-based assessment.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Gresham-Barlow students have demonstrated high achievement on the state assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics. According to the 1996 "*Indicators of Educational Quality*" report, more Gresham-Barlow students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 10 performed at the advanced level on the Oregon Statewide Assessment in reading than the state average, and fewer scored at the basic and proficient levels than the state average. Overall, 96 percent of third-grade and 91 percent of fifth-grade students scored at the proficient or advanced levels in reading in 1996. In writing during the same year, third-grade students surpassed their state counterparts in five of the six scoring criteria based upon the percentage of students scoring 4 or better on a 1-6 scale. In mathematics, where trend data have been collected, Gresham-Barlow students demonstrate consistent improvement from 1992-96 in grades 3 and 5. In 1996, the percentage of students in grades 3 and 5 scoring at basic level decreased at a greater rate than the state. Students in grade 3 in 1996, and in grade 5 in 1995 and 1996, received fewer basic scores than ever before. Between 1994 and 1996, eighth-graders in the district increased from below to above the state average in terms of the number of students scoring at the advanced level, and decreased from above to below the state average in number of students scoring at the basic level. The 1996 middle and high school mathematics scores are the highest for the district since state testing began in 1991.

STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM

Gresham-Barlow adopted Oregon's standards and benchmarks in 1995. The district began by aligning its curriculum with the state standards, starting with language arts, mathematics, and science. The curriculum committees, consisting of teachers and district administrators, also included health and technology standards and a grade 1-5 foreign-language requirement in the district curriculum frameworks that were produced. This review and alignment process helped to create much-needed instructional consistency across the district, particularly after the 1994 consolidation of four smaller districts. The curriculum alignment also encouraged teachers within benchmark clusters – grade levels K-3, for example, leading up to the grade-3 assessment – to begin to take joint responsibility for preparing students to meet the benchmarks.

In position papers that accompany the curriculum frameworks, approximately twelve teaching principles are described. Together, the position papers and curriculum frameworks guide curriculum, instruction, assessment, and the selection of instructional materials in each discipline for six-year cycles. The district has begun this process for social studies and intends to do the same for technology.

The standards and benchmarks adopted by the district were disseminated to teachers through professional development sessions, teacher-directed research activities, and the distribution of written and electronic materials by district-level staff. Much of the dissemination was accomplished through collegial review sessions, coordinated by the teachers who were designated to take the lead in the district reform effort (lead teachers). During these sessions, teachers reviewed standards, benchmarks, and state and local scoring guides, frequently using them to evaluate student work. Participants reported that the collegial review sessions contributed to a common understanding of the standards. Parents have also received a number of guides and booklets, as well as assessment items related to the standards on the Goals 2000-supported web site. Through these resources, district administrators said they have come to perceive standards-based reform as a district priority.

Most administrators and teachers agree that Gresham-Barlow has brought academic standards into clear focus, clarifying expectations for all education stakeholders and helping instructors assess achievement of the standards more effectively. And through the use of portfolios, in which teachers collect samples of students' best work and teacher scoring guides, which clearly define different levels of proficiency, students are better informed of new learning expectations.

ASSESSMENT

Gresham-Barlow's overall reform effort – called *Higher Standards: Curriculum, Assessment, Instruction, Culture* – aims to improve student performance through the use of a productive, valid, balanced, and reliable assessment system. This assessment system is designed to: (1) promote high standards of student achievement; (2) drive instructional decisions; (3) engage and challenge students within a meaningful context; (4) provide valid, comprehensive pictures of performance; and (5) respond to specific teaching and learning contexts. The assessment project,

called "Assessment 2000," was started with a Goals 2000 subgrant, which one administrators called "the glue that holds the reform effort together." The assessment project is the centerpiece of the district's effort to implement its comprehensive assessment system. This system consists of three types of assessment:

1) External assessments. The Oregon Statewide Assessment tests have been used since 1991 in reading and mathematics in grades 3, 5, 8, and 10 and in science in grades 5, 8, and 10. In addition, two performance assessments have been given in mathematics and analytical writing since the 1992-1993 academic year. These assessments are aligned with state standards. The state alternates years for the writing assessment. The state also requires that student work samples in reading/literature be collected and scored with an official reading scoring guide.

2) Internal, district-developed "common" assessment tasks. These performance tasks are aligned with state standards. They are scored with a district-developed scoring guide that is based on the state scoring guides. Through Assessment 2000, assessments in mathematics and reading were piloted in 1997 in grades not assessed by statewide tests. For over ten years, the district has also administered a locally created writing assessment in grades 3, 4, and 6-9.

3) Classroom-based assessment activities. These include projects, performance tasks, work samples, and observations. These assessments, selected by teachers, demonstrate progress on state and district performance standards.

At least three different assessment undertakings were supported by Goals 2000 funds: (1) the creation of local performance-based assessments and matching scoring guides; (2) collegial review sessions to increase scoring reliability and develop a common understanding of the benchmarks; and (3) research mini-grants awarded to teachers and/or schools.

The process of creating the district assessments began in 1996, and was directed by an interdisciplinary team of 20 teachers from all grade levels, considered leaders in classroom assessment (lead teachers), as well as principals and central office staff members. This team facilitated collegial review sessions, in which state scoring guides were adapted to become the basis for the district assessments in reading and mathematics. The team also oversaw the piloting of those assessments in 1997. In addition, the lead teachers used state scoring guides as the basis for teacher training in the evaluation of student work samples and portfolios for the purpose of meeting state requirements. A lead teacher explained that the district assessments probe more deeply into students' problem-solving methods than the state performance tests. She expects the district assessments to become increasingly more helpful to teachers as the tests are revised.

At the classroom level, teachers and/or schools were awarded mini-grants to research and develop assessments in particular content areas. Approximately 50 teachers participated in individual or small group research projects that explored the question, "How does the introduction of standards-based assessment influence student and teacher performance?" Teachers explored new methods for assessing progress in the specific areas in which they taught,

such as middle school science or oral proficiency in a foreign language. Some participating teachers used formative assessments and intervention strategies to track and improve the performance of students in targeted standards areas.

The mini-grants were directed by school leadership teams and involved groups of teachers from the same school. In one of these school-based assessment projects, teachers targeted standards and benchmarks in mathematics or reading, devised performance assessments, collected student work samples, scored the work, discussed the scores, and produced a school "standards portfolio" containing student exemplars of the standard. This portfolio was compared to the ones developed at other schools in an attempt to begin developing a district portfolio.

Together, the creation of the assessments and scoring guides, the collegial review sessions and the mini-grants have changed the way teachers in the district understand and use assessment methods. Another significant change in assessment policy in the district has been the introduction of benchmark conferences, in which students review evidence of their achievement of the benchmark – their test scores, work samples, and performance tasks – in conferences with parents and teachers. A middle-school principal first proposed this idea to the district central office and then proceeded to pilot the benchmark conferences at his school. They were a success. Now, the district requires the benchmark conferences for all students in grades 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10. According to one district administrator, teachers at each school were afraid, initially, to share their students' work, as well as their evaluations of their students' work, in such a public manner. Yet, the practice has brought many teachers out of isolation and improved their attitude toward the benchmarks, according to the teachers interviewed. Students are also benefiting from the experience. According to the new curriculum and assessment director, the benchmark conferences, particularly at the middle schools, represent an "immensely powerful" process.

Gresham-Barlow educators use student performance results in a variety of ways. The district publishes a report card, which includes disaggregated student achievement data (as well as customer satisfaction data from parent and student surveys), and schools make the data available to teachers. Central office staff observe patterns across the district and hold principals accountable for student performance: if a school is not making adequate progress toward meeting the standards, the district requests an improvement plan and offers technical assistance to the school. Principals and teachers analyze school data and use it in site improvement plans and to assess individual student performance. Through Goals 2000 funding, each school publishes its own annual school improvement report with student achievement, attendance, and other kinds of data. Parents receive these reports in the mail; they can also review student performance data in school displays and in board meetings.

Before the assessment project, teachers reported that they relied on textbook-oriented end-of-chapter tests to evaluate student performance. Now, assessment is used as a productive and dynamic tool to determine what students know and where they need help. District administrators believe that district- and classroom-level assessments are necessary to measure student achievement in years between the state tests. According to principals, all K-12 teachers currently are "on the same page" due to this initiative, and students, parents, and community members are better informed about learning expectations because of the reporting of data. They contend that

the use of scoring guides and district assessment tasks has created a common basis for dialogue about student achievement among teachers.

Professional Development

In 1993, teacher evaluation was changed to better support standards-based reform. The district started using a professional growth plan based on a model developed by nationally-known researcher Linda Darling-Hammond. According to the plan, each teacher designs a continuous professional growth plan, with the principal helping design, support, and critique the plan. The plan includes a broad goal for the teacher, to be achieved in a two- to three-year period, which relates directly to the school's improvement plan. Teachers track their progress through reflective journal writing, portfolios, teacher-directed research, peer observation, and other means. Administrators are required to arrange schoolwide sessions at which teachers can share their plans with colleagues. This professional growth model has shifted teacher evaluation from a summative to a capacity-building activity. Although teachers are not formally evaluated on their progress, teachers we interviewed reported that more teachers find their professional growth goals are increasing their ability to implement standards-based reforms.

Teachers receive professional development on standards and assessments during early dismissal days, including twelve early dismissal days each year for middle-school teachers and weekly early dismissal days for elementary-school teachers. Teachers have also benefited from two other sources of professional development: training on benchmarks and scoring offered by the state, and participation in the Proficiency-based Admissions Standards System project, in which certain Gresham-Barlow high school teachers, in collaboration with higher education officials and other teachers from across the state, helped develop, align, and field-test standards related to college admission.

Through the district's Goals 2000 subgrants, two teachers have gained valuable expertise in performance assessment and serve as a kind of "brain trust" in assessment for the district. These teachers, referred to as Teachers-on-Special-Assignment (TOSAs), were relieved of teaching duties so that they could lead the research in assessment. One is a mathematics teacher, the other a humanities teacher. The TOSAs have led faculty in-services to help teachers work on standards and performance-based assessment tasks and portfolios. In addition, regular classroom teachers and principals have requested on-site visits from the TOSAs for assistance on action research and other projects.

Also through Goals 2000 subgrants, the district implemented an experimental pilot project, called the Measurement, Inquiry, and Design Institute, for ten K-5 teachers and their students. The Institute, which ran for six weeks during the summers of 1997 and 1998, was conceived to assist teachers with a new elementary science curriculum and to encourage teaching and learning in mathematics and science that is aligned with the benchmarks. The Institute introduced teachers to a planning/lesson design model used in the Children's Art Institute, a program that has existed in the district for nearly ten years. Students and teachers used open-ended inquiry (in which students develop and test their own hypotheses) and hands-on, project-based learning to create

artistic products that reflected science principles and concepts. Teachers worked in new areas such as painting, paper and wire construction, and mural-making, and made presentations about the Institute and the planning model at their sites during the school year. In the pilot of the Institute, participating teachers acknowledged that the science content of the Institute was not as extensive as desired. They said that next year's program will be improved. They also hope to better inform principals about the project.

Principals receive staff development at their annual administrative academy and during the school year at principals' Council Meetings held every two weeks. In 1996-1997, district staff engaged principals in review and discussion of a sample of literature on school change. Printouts of statewide assessment data were distributed as well. Principals disaggregated and analyzed their school data and were encouraged to use this analysis as the basis for school improvement planning. Principals were also taught how to score student work samples.

Administrators and teachers interviewed agreed that the various professional development opportunities offered have effected significant change in the culture of the Gresham-Barlow school district. According to administrators and teachers, professional development has caused education stakeholders to speak "a common language" that is focused on higher expectations for all students. The new evaluation system has led to more genuine growth for teachers. Teacher practice has also changed: Instructional planning is more results-driven and better connected to the standards, and teachers are collaborating with one another in new ways, leading to greater appreciation between teachers across grade levels.

Reform at the School Level

The reform effort has produced a number of important changes in Gresham-Barlow schools. Among the instructional staff, teachers and principals observe increased collegiality and professional dialogue both within and between schools. Teachers are realizing new relationships, especially between teachers of grades that lead up to a benchmark: K-3 teachers, for example, are more likely to see themselves as working toward a common goal of helping students achieve the grade-3 benchmark. In addition, high school principals said some of their instructional departments were less insular and more open to interdisciplinary collaboration. Teachers are also more focused on the benchmarks and on the skills they need to help students meet them. Many teachers attributed this change to the work accomplished in collegial review sessions.

School staffs have assumed new responsibilities through the reform effort. Instead of receiving tests that have been handed down from the state or district, teachers are now designing district- and classroom-level assessments that foster instructional change. And principals said that they are more likely to work with teachers on instructional issues instead of merely evaluating teachers' progress. In their own bimonthly meetings, principals now devote at least one hour to instructional issues. Principals also acknowledge that the district holds them accountable for student achievement and not simply for client satisfaction, as in the past.

District administrators believe that instruction is improving due to implementation of the standards. Teachers and principals agree, pointing to organizational changes at certain schools, such as having teachers work with the same group of students for several years, that suggest a profound willingness to change instruction. The benchmark conferences provide school staff with a particularly exciting new way to interact with students and their families. So far, these experiences with parents have been more substantive at the middle-school level than at the high school, as parents of middle-school students seem especially concerned about their children's successful transition to high school. (Benchmark conferences at the elementary schools are still rather new.)

As mentioned, teachers are challenged by the demands of performance assessment, and their union has raised questions about whether teachers can accommodate the extra work as part of their regular contract. "The contract is based on the old model of teaching," observed one teacher. Principals spoke of tensions that have developed among teachers, some of whom resent that departments such as business and physical education are not required to do the new assessments. One principal is considering assigning such teachers to core-subject teachers as scoring partners, to relieve some of the burden. To help new teachers with standards and assessment, the district may develop a mentoring program in the future.

Overall Successes and Challenges

Assessment has been a powerful driver of change in Gresham-Barlow School District. Overall expectations have been raised for students, and school staff have developed a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between instruction and assessment. Principals contend that the use of scoring guides and district assessment tasks has created a common basis for dialogue among student achievement among students. Perhaps most important, teachers have been surprised at how well students have met the new academic challenges. "The floor and ceiling have been raised," according to a high school principal, resulting in improved student work.

The district has also been particularly successful at articulating higher learning expectations to all education stakeholders. In addition to professional development, the district has used printed materials and electronic resources to communicate the essence of its reform effort to parents, community members, school staff, and the business community.

Administrators and teachers agreed that the various professional development opportunities offered to school staff have focused all education stakeholders on higher expectations for all students – a "common language" throughout the district. Furthermore, the new evaluation system has led to more genuine growth for teachers than the previous system. Overall, most principals and teachers expressed confidence that all students will improve their academic performance due to the results-driven K-12 approach to learning, the use of more accurate assessments that lead to discussion, and clearer Individualized Educational Plans that focus at-risk students on the same goals as other students.

Challenges remain, particularly because Gresham-Barlow is still in the process of implementing its assessment system. Teachers acknowledge that inter-rater reliability in scoring the district assessments is lower than desired. And although they agree with the district's decision to focus initially on scoring assessments, teachers say they now need more training in how to devising classroom-level assessments. Furthermore, because the district continues to use traditional letter-grading, teachers feel pressured. The dual system "is driving a lot of us nuts," said an elementary school teacher. Some teachers have even left the district because of the extra work involved.

A related obstacle is the lack of time for teachers to participate in professional development. Also, some teachers resist the authority of the TOSAs, and funding for the TOSA positions has not been secured in the 1998-99 budget. And like many districts nationwide, Gresham-Barlow faces challenges in providing its staff with training in the use of technology. A Goals 2000 $50,000 planning subgrant provided some basic professional development in using new equipment acquired by the district through a technology bond, but more is needed.

Getting regular and special-education teachers to believe their special-education students can succeed has also been an obstacle for the district. Another concern is how the district will deal with students who do not achieve the benchmarks. To assist low-achieving students, many schools are developing special programs. Still, teachers say that although 80 percent of their students in the middle range of achievement are well served by the current reform effort, the highest and lowest 10 percent will need more resources and attention.

During the summer of 1998, the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and the director of curriculum, assessment, and technology left the district to retire or pursue other positions. Despite these challenges, the administrators who were leaving expressed confidence that the district would sustain its momentum for reform in the upcoming years.

GOALS 2000 SUBGRANTS

Grant name	Grant amount	Year	Emphasis
Goals 2000 Planning Subgrant for Technology Literacy	$50,000	1995-1996	Contributed to professional development for teachers in the use of new equipment acquired through technology bond
Goals 2000 Assessment 2000 Subgrant	$172,000	1996-1997	Supported the development of a comprehensive assessment system aligned with state standards, district standards, and newly developed college admission standards. Teachers developed and piloted districtwide performance-based assessments.
Goals 2000 Standards 2000 Subgrant	$78,000	1997-1998	Provided professional development to teachers in the development and use of performance-based assessments, including targeted work in content areas in which student performance on statewide assessments was weak.
Goals 2000 Science Design 2000 Subgrant	$54,000	1997-1998	Used to develop and implement a project-based summer laboratory and institute for K-5 teachers and students to explore new ways to teach measurement and inquiry in mathematics and science. Project was linked to state standards and industry needs.

JERSEY CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

JERSEY CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS is the second largest school district in the state of New Jersey. Located in Jersey City, the district has a diverse student population of 30,000. African-Americans comprise 40 percent of the student population, Hispanic students 38 percent, and white students 19 percent. Eighty-four percent of the students receive free or reduced-price lunches. The size of the district's student population declined throughout the 1980s, but began to rebound in 1989, when the district was taken over by the state.

The state's longstanding battle with its urban districts over school funding has influenced Jersey City Public Schools' governance. In the 1970 *Robinson v. Cahill* case, lawyers representing urban districts successfully argued that poor urban districts and their students are disadvantaged when schools are financed using property tax revenues. As a result of this case and others, the courts require the state to invest millions of supplemental dollars in its urban school districts. The state has always been concerned with the seemingly ineffective use of these funds. These concerns ultimately led to state takeovers of New Jersey's three largest urban districts: Jersey City in 1989, Paterson in 1991, and Newark in 1995. The takeovers were only supposed last five years, but due to a change in state law, the department of education cannot return the districts to local control until they meet the new state standards, passed in 1996.

Due to the state takeover, the Superintendent of Jersey City Public Schools is appointed by the state commissioner. The district has had four superintendents in the nine years since the takeover. The current superintendent has held the position for eighteen months and has focused the district on increasing academic achievement and attendance and decreasing the dropout rate, which is currently 10 percent. The superintendent noted that because the district is a major employer in the city, local politics can sometimes interfere with district management. But because he is appointed by the state, and not by a local school board, he can make decisions, particularly personnel decisions, without concern about political fallout. In fact, the superintendent maintains veto power in local school board decisions, even though that action has been taken only once during his tenure.

Although teachers were somewhat demoralized during the initial years of the state takeover, the superintendent and other district administrators said that teachers have come to accept the situation. Teachers expressed pleasure with the results from surveys of over 8000 community members and parents indicating increased satisfaction with the district's performance over the last two years. The district and the teachers' union have a working relationship characterized by compromise and accommodation on both sides.

Jersey City Public Schools began implementing its first strategic plan in 1995. The plan was developed by committees of local and state educators in response to a state mandate and based on the state model of strategic planning. The model required the district to develop a five-year strategy to address clearly articulated district goals. The plan outlines district objectives and

activities to address those objectives, as well as student performance targets by district, school, and grade level. District objectives include:

- Improved school effectiveness, teaching, and academic achievement of all students through a collaborative, systemic educational reform effort;
- Improved governance and management;
- Strengthening of parent and community involvement in education reform efforts at the district and school levels; and
- A system to provide sustained, high quality professional development for pre- and in-service teachers, including the development of a professional development school model.

Revisions to the plan during the 1997-98 academic year focused on student attainment of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards, improving the lowest performing schools, increasing staff accountability, providing new professional development opportunities, and emphasizing school-based planning and evaluation activities.

District personnel indicated that the overall goal of the reform effort is to increase student performance. According to the superintendent, school management had to be improved to achieve this goal. Consequently, the superintendent took teams of specialists into each school, audited its policies, processes, and procedures, and removed leaders in schools that were poorly run. He also implemented an aggressive accountability system and mandated that principals conduct 80 classroom evaluations each year, regardless of the size of the teaching force in each school. Another significant aspect of the district's reform effort is the establishment of six professional development schools, and numerous other professional development opportunities, designed to hone the skills of the teaching force.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Jersey City Public Schools shows gains in student achievement. In 1997-98, the district met or exceeded the state standard of a 75 percent passing rate in eighth-grade reading and mathematics on the Early Warning Test and in fourth-grade mathematics and writing on the Metropolitan Achievement Test, 7th Edition. The highest passing rates were in eighth-grade reading, at 82.1 percent, and in fourth-grade writing, at 81.2 percent. Eleventh-grade students have not yet met the state standard of 85 percent passing districtwide, but they have exceeded the district's own benchmark in reading, set at a higher level than the state's, by 3 percent, which represents an increase from 1996-97 of 9.6 percent. The district reduced its dropout rate from 14.6 percent in 1996-97 to 10 percent in 1997-98. The district's attendance rate remained constant and consistently high in 1997 and 1998, at approximately 91 percent.

STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM

All New Jersey districts adopted the state standards in 1996. In addition to the state standards, the district adopted five Student Performance Standards. These standards, developed with input from the business community, parents, and educators, foster:

- The student as an effective communicator;
- The student as a community/global contributor;
- The student as a critical thinker;
- The student as a quality producer; and
- The student as a complex thinker.

While the state standards were being developed, the Jersey City School District produced grade-level competencies, which delineate what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Written by committees of four or five teachers and subject-area supervisors, the grade-level competencies were developed over several years with input from various stakeholders in the district. The district began aligning its competencies with the state standards during the 1996-97 school year. It is in the process of completing alignment in the elementary grades in mathematics, language arts, social studies, science, health, physical education, and fine arts. The competencies are content- and process-oriented. They require students to know subject-area content as well as understand how to apply, analyze, and synthesize information. They are aligned with the state standards, which focus heavily on the process of learning, according to the district curriculum specialist.

The district produces curriculum guides that are aligned with the state standards and the grade-level competencies. These curriculum guides, developed by teachers and supervisors, include a pacing chart to give teachers a common idea of how long to work on a given topic. In addition, the guides encourage teachers to use interdisciplinary thematic units and to participate in grade-level planning. All new instructional materials and supplies are purchased to support the teaching of the standards and curricula.

The standards, competencies, and guides were distributed to teachers as they became available. The district held seminars and workshops to introduce the standards and competencies to teachers as well as to parents and other interested community members. The grade-level competencies were also sent to parents, starting with the parents of kindergarten students. One district administrator said that everybody now knows what is expected of the children as a result of the district's efforts to involve the community in the reform activities.

Goals 2000 funds supported the implementation curricular reform by providing math and science teachers with the training needed to address goals and objectives in the curricula that are technology based. Goals 2000 funds also supported the implementation of curricular reform by providing professional development for teachers that stresses instructional skills such as integrated planning, higher-order questioning, and project-based assessment.

Assessment

Students in Jersey City Public Schools take a variety of state and local tests. State-required tests include the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment, now given in language arts literacy, mathematics, and science to all fourth-graders in the state (this test will be expanded over the next several years to include the seven academic and five cross-content workplace readiness areas); the Early Warning Test and the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment, given in 1998 as a field test to eighth-graders to help them prepare for the new eleventh-grade High School Proficiency Assessment (now being field tested) in language arts and mathematics. The fourth-grade test is aligned with the state standards; the eighth- and eleventh-grade tests are in the process of being aligned. The district tests include midterm and final exams, administered to grades 4-12, and the Metropolitan Achievement Test, 7th Edition, given in grades 2 through 8 in language and mathematics. In addition, the district has developed informal reading assessments in seven foreign languages: Arabic, Mandarin, Gujarati, Hindi, Korean, Polish, and Vietnamese. The district uses the Aprenda Test, a Spanish version of the Stanford Achievement Test, to assess literacy in Spanish-speaking students.

District administrators view assessment as a critical component in reform. According to one official, understanding student strengths and weaknesses is the starting point for all reform initiatives. In fact, several interviewees said that assessment is a driver of reform in the district, guiding changes in curriculum, instruction, and professional development. Goals 2000 funds supported training for teachers and principals in data analysis and the use of performance-based assessments, such as portfolios and group projects, at the classroom level.

Assessment serves several purposes in the district. State assessment results are used as indicators of student achievement in the state accountability system, while the local assessments are used as diagnostic tests. The local exams, developed by teachers in the district, count for only 10 percent of a student's grade but provide teachers and administrators with valuable information that is used to make decisions about curricular revision, instructional change, professional development, and the implementation of special programs. According to one district administrator, the local exams, which are aligned with the grade-level competencies, are forcing teachers to teach the local curriculum and meet the State Core Curriculum Content Standards. The Metropolitan Achievement Test, 7th Edition, is given to provide data that is nationally normed, often necessary for federal requirements.

Professional Development

A significant aspect of the reform effort in Jersey City Public Schools is building the capacity of teachers to teach the state standards successfully. The district emphasizes the significance of a well-trained teaching force as a key to increased student performance. A cornerstone in the district's efforts to create a well-trained teaching force is its establishment of six professional development schools (PDSs).

Professional development schools are regular schools, with students, teachers and principals who serve as exemplars of the types of learning communities that positively affect student achievement. The schools provide an effective learning environment for students, and a laboratory in which administrators, in-service teachers, and pre-service teachers can observe and learn about research-based, state-of-the-art teaching techniques. One of the goals of the PDSs is to bridge the gap between professional development/preservice training and practice.

The district plans to make its professional development schools the primary means of delivering staff development. One of four district system objectives states that by the year 2000, the professional development schools will be the district's primary delivery system and support structure for providing sustained high-quality professional development for pre- and in-service teachers.

Lead teachers in the professional development schools model "best practices" for visiting district employees and preservice teachers. These teachers have been trained in "Multiple Intelligences" theory (developed by Harvard University professor Howard Gardner), psychological approaches to teaching, assertive discipline, transdisciplinary technology integration, and the design of professional development portfolios. They have also been trained in mentoring and coaching, as well as the core subject areas. In addition, the lead teachers received training in a comprehensive teaching method called "Frameworks for Teaching," and attended workshops and conferences outside of the district. The teachers are expected to display their training as they model and work with other teachers. PDS administrators also received training in curriculum integration of cognitive theory and neurological research, reading instruction and constructivist teaching.

At the time of the site visit, over 150 teachers had visited the professional development schools. The schools are open to all district personnel. In order to visit, however, teachers have to request a visit and gain approval of their principals. Once the visit is approved, the visiting teacher is required to set-up an appointment with the PDS teacher to be observed and discuss the purpose and goals of the observation. Then, the PDS requests a substitute from the district's pool to cover the visiting teacher's classes and the visiting teacher comes to the PDS.

The professional development schools serve as induction sites for preservice and beginning teachers. Designed using a clinical teaching model, the schools operate in collaboration with Fairleigh Dickinson University's School of Education. Pre-service teachers from the University spend time in the schools volunteering, observing, and student teaching. In addition, the university offers several courses on-site. The students gain first-hand experience in schools, with increasing levels of teaching responsibility. The result, according to a professor from the University, is that they emerge from their teacher education program with a clear sense of how schools operate and a good deal of practical experience working with students. The district has hired a number of graduates from the program. The University offers a host of activities for inservice teachers and offers tuition reduction for Jersey City teachers taking on-site courses.

In addition to the PDSs, the district offers other professional development opportunities for its staff. In a program called the Teacher Academy, the district trains teachers who have been identified by their principals as needing extra help in instruction. The Academy, which is run

during the summer, is staffed by two professional developers hired by the district. The teachers in the Academy identify themes and complete projects around those themes. Followup activities for these teachers include inservices each month during the school year, and coaching and informal chats via the Internet. Further, the district offers numerous workshops and seminars in topics identified by teachers in a 1997 needs assessment, as well as special training for teachers in schools with particularly low assessment scores.

In addition, district administrators expect principals to be instructional leaders and are willing to provide continued professional development toward that end. During the 1997-98 school year, the district offered a voluntary professional development program for the administrative staff, held after school on scheduled dates. The district also conducts an annual Summer Administrators' Academy, which addresses the administrators' role as instructional leaders.

Goals 2000 plays a significant role in district professional development activities. In fact, all of the Goals 2000 funds received by the district are earmarked for professional development. The funds supported intensive training for teachers in low-performing schools and additional training for 100 math and science teachers to integrate technology into the curriculum. Most significantly, the Goals 2000 funds were used by the district to develop and run its six professional development schools and offer extensive training to the PDS teachers. The university spokesperson said that the Goals 2000 subgrant allowed the district and university to extend their partnership and to facilitate implementation of their plan to improve its teacher preparation program.

TECHNOLOGY

To review the district's technology needs, in 1995, the district surveyed all certified, non-certified, and support staff. In addition, district leaders made site visits to districts throughout the state to review the status of current technology; curriculum supervisors were interviewed; and the district's technology experts reviewed the district's 1991-1994 educational technology planning document. Upon completion of this review, the district created a 1996-2001 educational technology plan. Objectives for the plan include: increasing access to equipment, providing Internet access in all buildings, connecting all buildings to the central office, connecting the district to the county technology infrastructure, establishing an in-house technology training program, ensuring equitable use of technology, and maintaining an educational technology department to provide technical assistance, training, management, and evaluation services. The director of technology expects high-speed Internet access to be in place for all kindergarten through grade-8 classrooms, and 50 high school classrooms, labs, and laboratories, by the fall of 1998. Currently, the district is increasing the number of computers in each classroom.

Federal funds, such as Title I and, at the professional development schools, Eisenhower funds, have been applied toward these objectives. Staff development in technology has also been supported through a combination of federal, state, and local funds, including Goals 2000 funds, which were used to create twenty-one county-wide educational technology training centers throughout the state. But the most significant influence on district technology has been the

Abbott funds, set aside for urban districts by the state starting two years ago. Jersey City Public Schools received $10 million above and beyond its annual $2 million technology budget to use for technology, as well as money to support wiring throughout the district. It used Abbott funds to establish two full-time technology trainer positions and, with Goals 2000 funds, to create the training centers. Abbott funds also paid for substitutes so that 1200 teachers could attend two days of mandatory technology training in basic and more specialized technology uses. Teachers participated in grade-level teams and received followup visits and coaching from district staff. The district also provides more advanced technology training after school and during the summers. A major component of the district's forthcoming staff development plan will include technology.

The director of technology says that most of the teaching staff is at the beginning stage of technology integration, with the professional development schools having progressed further than the regular schools. The district has also started training administrators to understand the district's technology efforts.

Reform at the School Level

Principals and teachers at the professional development schools report that their schools have been transformed as a result of the conversion from regular to professional development schools. Part of this transformation is due to the fact that at each professional development school, staff developed a unique area of expertise related to school and community needs. At one school, school staff and community members chose to stress conflict resolution, which became a topic for much professional development. Teachers reported that the school currently serves as a district model for the use of conflict resolution strategies in the classroom. Similarly, through staff development and changes in teacher practice, another school has become an exemplar in the inclusion of bilingual, ESL, and special education students in general education classes. PDS staff at other schools have specialized in technology, early childhood, and the arts, among other areas.

Principals said that the development of a specialization at the professional development schools has increased lead teachers' self-confidence and established a "self-fulfilling prophecy" at the schools. The specialized training, and the professionalism that accompanied the lead teachers' new roles, helped them begin to "identify as high-performers." Visits from teachers at other schools reinforced their self-confidence and expertise. Principals also said that participation in a urban/suburban consortium of professional development schools helped erode stereotypes about urban schools internalized by their own staff.

The training and expertise of the lead teachers has been spread to other staff in the professional development schools in a variety of ways. First, most of the schools used common planning times and weekly grade-level meetings to encourage teacher collaboration. Second, the lead teachers reported that they served as informal assistants to their principals, particularly regarding staff development. Third, more teachers gradually began to take advantage of the Teacher Resource Centers established at each professional development school. In these Centers,

computers, books, magazines, videos, and other teaching resources were made available. The Centers also served as a central meeting place at the schools, a place where teachers could meet and collaborate on instruction.

According to the lead teachers, they started out as their schools' "best kept secret." It took over a year for them to gain the trust of their colleagues, at their own schools and others, and begin to fulfill their role as mentors. Principals often facilitated this change.

Goals 2000 funds contributed to the provision of instructional materials, technology, and stipends for lead teachers at the PDSs.

Overall Successes and Challenges

District leaders point to the development and implementation of their professional development system, particularly their professional development schools, as a major success of their reform movement. They contend that the district's provision of high-quality professional development, along with an aligned curriculum and improved management at the school level, is increasing student achievement of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. Furthermore, principals indicated that professional development across the district has empowered teachers, increased the collaboration between teachers, and improved the instructional strategies in schools across the district.

Positive changes at the PDSs cited by principals and teachers include an "energized" instructional staff, with greater confidence, as well as increased student achievement. Principals reported more project-based teaching, more use of learning centers, and better organization and planning among staff. They felt that even the most traditional teachers at their schools were beginning to modify their instruction, and that these schoolwide improvements could be traced to the professional development that had been provided to lead teachers. Principals also felt that preservice teachers' student-teaching had improved, due in part to the mentorship by lead teachers. Most significantly, principals felt that the gains in student performance at their schools resulted from improved delivery of instruction related to these changes.

Lead teachers at PDSs said teaching seemed "easier" to them as a result of the training and instructional resources they had received. "We're all on the same page now," said one. Lead teachers also expressed satisfaction with the growing openness between all staff at their schools.

According to the curriculum specialist, the district has been successful in encouraging teachers throughout the district to help students work collaboratively, engage in higher-order thinking, and make logical links across disciplines. Lead teachers, principals, and district administrators are confident that teachers are using the new curricula, particularly because teachers must include the state standard and grade-level competencies in their lesson plans, which are reviewed regularly by principals and district administrators. According to district administrators and principals, more teachers are also using performance-based assessments in their daily lessons. They employ scoring guides to grade student writing samples, and they assign more projects and authentic

assessments. Lead teachers at the PDSs and several district administrators believe that the new assessment strategies are supporting improvements in instruction. Another district success is the greater emphasis on the analysis of test results. Principals and teachers are required to use test data to develop their school and professional development plans. As a result, school staff claim they are using their resources more effectively.

The technology coordinator reported that the district's greatest successes with technology include gaining high-speed access to the Internet in all classrooms – a significant accomplishment for a district this size, in his opinion.

Interviewees reported that challenges to the growth of the PDS system include finding ways to motivate less reform-oriented teachers throughout the district. Principals noted that "the middle group" of "mediocre" teachers was now the explicit target for their programs. Lead teachers said that gaining the trust of their peers continues to be a challenge. They also felt that they needed more time and resources to allow them to observe the teachers they were mentoring in their own classrooms. This they felt would establish a more balanced relationship between lead teachers and their mentees. All administrators and teachers agreed that finding time for more professional development and collaboration is an important challenge to the growth of the PDS system.

Another challenge facing the district is how to integrate technology fully into the classroom – a difficult task for a district this size. The superintendent's mandate that principals begin monitoring the use of technology in their classroom observations has helped to increase the use of technology.

GOALS 2000 SUBGRANTS

Grant name	Grant amount	Year	Emphasis
Goals 2000 Professional Development Subgrants (3)	$499,999	1995-1998	Supported district participation in a consortium of state-operated districts, school-level planning and reform activities, implementation of six professional development schools, intensive professional development for teachers at ten low-performing schools, and technology training for 100 mathematics and science teachers.

KENT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SYSTEM

KENT COUNTY, located on Maryland's Upper Eastern Shore, is a largely rural area with a population of 18,000. The Kent County Public Schools System, the smallest in the state, has an enrollment of 2,900 students. Seventy-one percent of the students are white, 25 percent are African American, 2 percent are Hispanic, and 1 percent are Native American. During the 1996-97 school year, 37 percent of the students received free or reduced-price lunches. With a professional staff of 172 teachers, the district has four elementary schools, three middle schools, and one high school.

Initial planning of the reform effort in Kent County began during the 1995-96 school year, when the district held a community meeting with 140 students, parents, business people, teachers, administrators, and representatives from government agencies and higher education. After reviewing student achievement scores and the district mission, the group developed a list of what students should know and be able to do upon completion of high school. The Kent County School system incorporated these community priorities into their strategic plan.

Developed over the course of the 1995-96 school year, the five-year strategic plan identifies five system goals that are necessary if Kent County is to become, in the words of the superintendent, the "best school system in Maryland." The strategic plan also includes a professional development plan, a technology plan, a plan for curriculum development, and a plan for school improvement. In the school improvement plan, all goals must include a timeline, specification of measurement, description of milestones, and evaluation techniques.

Each of the system's long-range goals is accompanied by a series of highly specific indicators and annual objectives that can be used to measure the district's progress toward meetings its goals. The five goals are:

- Kent County students will demonstrate knowledge of basic skills and the ability to apply higher order thinking skills to solve problems and communicate the results.
- Technology will be integrated into all aspects of instruction and administration to access, gather, analyze, evaluate, and communicate information.
- Kent County Public Schools System will be a safe and orderly environment for successful learning to take place.
- Kent County Public Schools System will seek to enhance positive, active parent and community involvement in the education of all students.
- Kent County Public School students will demonstrate personal responsibility and lifelong learning.

The district enjoys a very positive relationship with the state. Kent's superintendent was the Deputy Superintendent of Instruction at the state department of education and is well versed in state policies, programs, and priorities. The superintendent has been in the district for four years and has a considerable expertise in curriculum and instruction.

In response to *Prisoners of Time*, a state report indicating that students need to spend more focused time on academic endeavors, much of the district's reform effort has attempted to extend learning time, through extended-day and extended-year programs, as well as through the implementation of block scheduling at the secondary level.

Student Outcomes

Students in Kent County Public Schools have demonstrated increased academic performance on the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) over the past several years. Scores at the middle-school level, where the Goals 2000 funds have been targeted, increased between 1995 and 1997 in all subjects. (Most of the growth occurred between 1993 and 1996. The 1997 scores were about the same as the 1996 scores.) At Chestertown Middle School, for example, 13 percent of the fifth-grade students met or exceeded state performance standards in reading in 1995. By 1997, the percentage had increased to 45 percent. Similarly, the percentage of Chestertown fifth-grade students who met or exceeded state performance standards in math increased from 26 to 50 percent between those years. In social studies, the percentage of fifth-graders meeting state performance standards more than doubled, increasing from 20 to 45 percent. In science, the percentage of Chestertown students meeting state performance standards increased from 31 percent to 55 percent. The MSPAP scores at the other two middle schools increased as well.

Though the middle schools have not yet met the state high-level MSPAP target of 70 percent of the students performing at a satisfactory level and 25 percent of the students performing at an excellent level, the district is making progress toward that goal. The district has very high scores at the elementary level and was recognized as having one of the highest growth index rates in the state. The local assessments, developed less than three years ago, have been changing each year based on teacher input. Consequently, though student scores have been increasing on the mathematics assessment, it is not possible to document trend data.

Standards and Curriculum

The district has developed content standards in mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts which are aligned with the state standards. The district also created assessments and established satisfactory performance levels in mathematics and science and is piloting assessment and performance levels in social studies.

The district's *Essential Curricula*, developed by a team of administrators and teachers over the past several years and reviewed by state curriculum experts, are aligned with the state and local standards. The *Essential Curricula* identify benchmarks for each grade-level in mathematics, science, social studies, and provide curriculum guidelines for each benchmark. The district is currently completing the writing curriculum. According to the superintendent, district curricula are well aligned with the standards in grades K-8, but need to be better aligned at the high-school level.

The *Essential Curricula* are quite different from the curricula used in the district in previous years. The assistant superintendent said that the *Essential Curricula* are more research-based and "give teachers the opportunity to display more creativity in their work than ever before." Teachers contend that the curriculum used to be the textbook. Now, according to teachers, the curriculum is less rigid and fits better into an integrated K-12 system of learning.

The district distributed the *Essential Curricula* to all teachers and administrators. All teachers in the district also have access to the *Essential Learnings*, a more detailed curriculum guide for each subject. Teachers we interviewed estimate that 60 to 70 percent of the staff use the *Essential Curricula*. Principals estimate that between 90 and 100 percent of the teachers are implementing the district curriculum. They, along with the superintendent, contend that when use of the curriculum became a factor in teacher evaluations, more teachers began to use it.

Goals 2000 subgrants played a pivotal role in the development of the *Essential Curricula*. The funds were used to provide stipends to teachers as they participated in the writing of the curricula and to pay for a consultant from St. Mary's College to help develop the science curriculum. Goals 2000 subgrants also supported professional development in performance-based instruction and assessment, which teachers needed to write and teach the curricula.

ASSESSMENT

Students in Kent County take several state and local exams. The state assessments include the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP), taken in grades 3, 5, and 8 in reading, writing, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The MSPAP assesses schools, not individual students. It is aligned with the state standards, tests higher-order thinking skills, and includes performance-based items. Schools that fail to make adequate progress toward the MSPAP targets set by the state are placed on a list of "critically low-performing schools" and threatened with reconstitution.

The state also requires that students pass the Maryland Functional Tests in reading, mathematics, writing, and citizenship in order to graduate. The test, which can be taken by students in grades 9 through 12, assesses basic skills. However, the state is phasing in end-of-course exams at the secondary level, with the expectation that these subject-specific exams will eventually replace the current functional skills tests. In addition, the state administers the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills to students in grades 4, 6, and 9.

Encouraged by the state, the district developed local assessments in mathematics and science; a social studies assessment is being piloted. The assessments, less than three years old, are closely aligned with the state standards and *Essential Curricula*. The science assessment covers content in earth, space, and physical science; mathematics assessment includes content and performance-based items. The state provided regular workshops in assessment development and released discarded MSPAP test items for district use in its efforts. In addition, state education administrators were always available to answer questions and lend support to the effort. The district also administers end-of-course exams in grades 9-12.

Interviewees agree that performance-based assessment is the driver of instructional change in Kent County. The district has moved toward performance-based instruction and assessment in part because research suggest that this is an effective of teaching, and in part because of a desire to align its practices with the state exam. Changes in assessment methods in the district, and the availability of assessment data, have also increased the amount of writing done in schools.

Assessments are used in the district in many ways. The local tests give the district an intermediate assessment of where students are in reference to benchmarks and standards. The district generates break-out data for local assessments by school, teacher, individual student, benchmark, and test item. This data helps the district administrators, principals, and teachers identify and address student weaknesses, re-assess and better focus instruction, pinpoint professional development needs, and better prepare students for taking the MSPAP. The local assessments also ensure that the *Essential Curricula* are being taught and give students practice in taking performance-based exams.

Professional Development

The district strategic plan describes staff development as "the bridge between educational goals and student achievement." This view, coupled with the superintendent's strong emphasis on instruction, makes staff development an important component of the district's reform effort. The strategic plan outlines staff development priorities, which were determined largely from assessment data. These include the introduction and use of performance-based instruction and assessment (especially for the middle schools), technology training, early literacy development training, and support in reading across the curriculum. The strategic plan also describes a three-part professional development plan, designed by teachers, which lists individual, school-level, and district-level professional goals.

Teachers in the district received professional development in designing performance-based curriculum and district-level assessments, creating and scoring guides, and planning performance-based lessons and units. In addition, teachers received professional development in the use of technology, including instruction about e-mail and the World Wide Web. (All teachers have an e-mail account.) Teachers also received instruction in planning for block scheduling, reading-across-the-curriculum, and early literacy training.

According to teachers, the reform effort is changing professional development in the district. The teachers noted that often professional development :

- Involves multiple sessions on the same topic.
- Often includes the opportunity to experiment with new ideas in their classrooms and attend followup sessions where they can reflect on their practice.
- Is more frequent (the district provides ½ day of release time each month for professional development) than it has been in previous years.
- Includes planning time is that is better coordinated, which fosters increased teacher collaboration.
- Involves special education and regular education teachers sharing information and strategies.
- Includes the opportunity to participate in peer observation activities one day each year.

Principals in the district also receive professional development. They are given training in performance-based instruction and assessment to support them in their roles as instructional leaders in their schools. According to principals, the professional development that they received as part of the current reform effort is research-based and designed to help them better assist their teachers. In addition, the principals were also trained the use of research-based models for recognizing and developing family involvement.

Goals 2000 funds were and continue to be instrumental in the district's ability to provide staff development. Goals 2000 funds supported teachers as they learned to create and use performance-based lessons and assessments by affording substitutes for teachers who were engaged in professional development during the school year and providing stipends for teachers who received professional development during the summer. Principals indicated that stipends motivated teachers and indicated to them that their time and effort were valued.

Goals 2000 innovative programs and continuation subgrants paid for the services of a professional development consultant and the district's participation in a state performance-assessment consortium. In addition, the subgrants provided funds for substitutes for teacher inservices, and for conference fees, stipends, and staff travel to sites outside of the county. Goals 2000 also paid the salaries of the district's "helping" teachers, who conduct much of the staff development. In addition, the grants supported lead teachers who attended conferences, workshops, and trai...ng sessions and then shared the information they learned with the rest of the district in what is called a "trainer-of-trainers" model.

TECHNOLOGY

The district leadership strongly believes that the use of technology must be integrated into all aspects of the school system. Its five-year technology plan, which covers the period from 1997 to 2002, identifies as goals the integration of technology in: (1) student instruction, (2) training and technical assistance, (3) administrative services, (4) districtwide communications, and (5)

evaluation. The plan also includes Technology Standards and Guidelines, which delineate learning goals and objectives for students in each academic area. A technology team, composed of district administrators, principals, and other interested parties, will evaluate the district's technology efforts to ensure that the plan is being adequately implemented.

The district plans to integrate technology into instruction by improving teacher and student access to technological resources in classrooms and other learning centers. Goals 2000 and Technology Literacy Challenge Fund (TLCF) funds play a large role in helping the district realize its goals in this area. Goals 2000 and TLCF monies were used to purchase computers and other equipment for the Enhanced Media Centers in the three middle schools in the district. The funds were used to purchase a work group server, five Power Mac 5200's, Internet access, a laser printer, a color printer, a color scanner, and assorted software programs for each center. The funds also supported professional development in the use of the equipment for all middle-school teachers. In addition, the district hired a technology support person to work with students, provide training for teachers, and work with teachers one-on-one during their planning periods.

Each center has at least 20 computers and was originally scheduled to remain open after school for student and community use one day each week. Because of low usage, however, the effort to keep the media centers open for extended hours is being reconceptualized.

In addition to the Goals 2000 and TLCF awards, local, state, and private initiatives have enabled the district to acquire a good deal of technological hardware. At the high school, students have access to a distance-learning classroom, two technology labs, and newly renovated "high-tech" science classroom. According to teachers, most elementary school classrooms have four computers and a printer, as well as a computer station and projector for group instruction. And, as a result of "Netweekend," all schools in the district have access to the Internet and the district's Intranet.

Technology is used in the district in numerous ways and to varying degrees. The *Essential Curricula* include a computerized component that supports its general content. Teachers are required to incorporate the use of technology into their lesson plans. In addition, teachers are using e-mail to communicate with each other and are also searching the Web to gather information and help in lesson planning

According to some teachers, the use of technology in teaching in Kent County is not yet wide-spread but is growing rapidly. At the middle-school level, students are using the labs to create web sites, to send and receive e-mail, and to create multi-media presentations. Students at one school send letters via e-mail to pen pals at a sister school in Finland, and parents can access information about the school through the school and the parent-teacher association web sites.

Reform at the School Level

Reforms in the district are manifested at the school level through the use of the school-wide strategic planning process and the *Essential Curricula*, the implementation of performance-based

assessments, the existence of the media centers and the extended-day and extended-year programs, and the district's emphasis on parental and community involvement.

According to the superintendent and principals, teachers in the district are implementing the *Essential Curricula* and performance-based assessments, particularly at the elementary and middle school levels. Both building and district administrators acknowledge, however, that more staff development is required in performance-based assessment to gain mastery.

Teachers indicated that they are aware of and have begun to implement the *Essential Curricula* and performance-based assessments. They said that using performance-based instruction and assessments has increased their knowledge about different learning styles, reduced the amount of ability grouping in their classrooms, and raised their levels of expectation for all students. One teacher said that before the district initiated these reforms, only the advanced students received interesting and challenging work, but with the implementation of the *Essential Curricula*, all students now have access. Acknowledging that students learn at different rates, some teachers expressed concern that students at the lowest levels of achievement were being left behind. Other teachers countered by saying that the needs of these students are met through multi-aged, non-graded classrooms at the elementary level and by breaking one-semester courses into two semesters at the high-school level.

Teachers reported that because of the reforms, the teacher's role has become that of facilitator. Teaching is more child-centered. Teachers are no longer the "the sage on the stage," but rather "the guide on the side." Some teachers said that they enjoy teaching more with the use of performance-based instruction. One teacher said that having the freedom to create her own lessons increased her level of ownership and involvement. Another said that with performance-based instruction, she is giving students choices and providing different ways for students to demonstrate their understandings.

Principals indicated that the move to a flexible block schedule, in which students take fewer classes for longer periods of time each week, has been key in supporting teachers as they move toward performance-based instruction. Instructional periods in reading/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies were increased from 43 to 89 minutes for three days each week at the three middle schools. Principals at the three schools noted that since implementing the block scheduling, students have more time to work on projects, disciplinary referrals are decreasing, and MSPAP scores are increasing.

Principals focused, however, on the importance of the extended-day and extended-year programs. Located in each of the middle schools, the extended-day program is a voluntary after-school program for students. Offered twice a week for one and one-half hours each week and staffed by teachers, the programs provide experiential learning opportunities that reinforce reading, writing, mathematics, and/or science skills. The programs also provide exercises in test-taking, remediation for functional tests, and techniques for increased success on MSPAP. While designed to be more of an extension program than a remedial one, most low-achieving students are "strongly urged" to attend. Participation has increased each year since in the program

began in 1994. During the 1997-98 academic year, ten percent of the students in the district (approximately 300 students) participated.

Similarly, the extended-year program is a voluntary program that provides experiential, hands-on learning opportunities during the summer to students of varying achievement levels. The four-year-old program usually lasts for two or three weeks and has grown in popularity each year. During the summer of 1997, approximately 1,500 students (50 percent of the entire student population) participated in the program.

Each year the extended-year programs have themes and often involve the planning and completion of community-based projects. For example, one group read a portion of the *Diary of Anne Frank*, interviewed community members about the Holocaust, and eventually visited the Holocaust Museum in D.C. These and other enhancement activities offered through the programs involve real-world applications of various skills, including reading, writing, science, and mathematics. The programs generally enjoy strong community support and often attract dozens of volunteers at each site.

The extended-day and extended-year programs are directly supported by Goals 2000 funds. In addition to providing salaries for the teachers, the Goals 2000 funds provide resources necessary for program implementation and transportation for students who live long distances from the program sites. Currently, the extended-day program at one middle school is partnering with the Kent County Parks and Recreation Department. District leaders hope that other such collaborations will develop and help support the programs should Goals 2000 funds no longer be available.

Overall Successes and Challenges

The district succeeded in focusing all stakeholders on increased student achievement. District administrators, principals, and teachers stress the significance of how quality instruction, curriculum, assessment, and professional development have to work together toward the goal of increased academic achievement. Many of the people in the district credit the superintendent's focus on instruction as the cohesive factor in the reform effort. In addition, teachers and principals assert that the district's concentrated use of Goals 2000 funds at the three middle schools led to the steady rise in MSPAP scores at that level.

The district was also successful in implementing its assessment policy. The superintendent noted that teachers are beginning to understand assessment as an integral part of instruction and not as a prescriptive evaluation tool. District administrators consider the alignment of local assessments with the *Essential Curricula* a major achievement. Teachers indicated that their comments about the local assessments were taken into account when the exams were revised and that this, along with public reporting of scores and more detailed data break-outs, increased their level of "ownership." The teachers also reported the increased use of performance-based assessments.

The district still faces several challenges in the area of assessment. According to teachers, the district has a dual system of assessment: traditional grades and other types of assessments. The dual system is time-consuming and tiring for teachers. In addition, no consequences currently exist for low scores on local assessments. Once the assessments are reliable, the district will have to make decisions about the relative weight of the assessments on student grades and promotion.

The district succeeded in providing professional development that focuses on district- and school-level goals. It familiarized all middle-school teachers with performance-based assessment and provided all teachers in the district with e-mail access and training. The district is successfully using the "trainer-of-trainers" model to deliver professional development to its staff. The primary challenges in professional development involve the use of time. Teachers must work on their own time to accomplish the required tasks; some are beginning to burn-out because of the sheer volume of work required.

A significant accomplishment in the district is the establishment of the extended-day and extended year programs, which serve 10% and 50% of the student population, respectively. Teachers enjoy the opportunity to interact with students outside of the classroom setting. They also appreciate the small student-teacher ratios. They contend that the non-traditional settings of the extended-day and extended-year programs allow children who might not be as successful in the regular classroom to succeed. And though no studies have yet been conducted to analyze the in-school performance of the students who participate in these programs, teachers feel that the positive learning experiences that students have in the programs translate into better performance in the classroom.

GOALS 2000 SUBGRANTS AND TECHNOLOGY LITERACY CHALLENGE FUND GRANT

Grant name	Grant amount	Year	Emphasis
Local Education Reform Subgrant	$10,000	1994	Used for planning local reform
Innovative Programs Subgrant	$281,371 $101,507 $117,194	1995 1996 1997	Helped upgrade the media centers at the three middle schools, supported performance-based instructional training to the teaching staff, and supported extended-day and extended-year programs in the middle schools.
Technology Literacy Challenge Fund	$109,410	1997	Used to purchase technology for the media centers.

LAS CRUCES PUBLIC SCHOOLS

LAS CRUCES PUBLIC SCHOOLS is located in Las Cruces, New Mexico, a mid-sized city in the northeastern part of the state. The district has over 22,000 students, 62 percent of whom are Hispanic. White students comprise 34 percent of the student population, African Americans 2 percent, Asian Americans 1 percent, and Native Americans 1 percent. Just over 50 percent of the students receive free or reduced-price lunches. Ten percent of the students participate in the district's bilingual/ESL programs. The district has 878 teachers working in twenty-one elementary schools, seven middle schools, four high schools, and several alternative programs.

The heart of the reform effort in Las Cruces is the Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS), a five-year strategic plan written by district administrators during the 1993-1994 school year. The goal of the reform effort in Las Cruces, as identified in the EPSS, is to provide students with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to be successful in the work force or in higher education. To achieve this goal, the plan includes several objectives, including enrolling students in career clusters, increasing the graduation rate and student achievement scores, and helping all students become bilingual. The superintendent reported that improving academic achievement is of paramount importance.

The philosophy of Las Cruces Public Schools' reform movement rests in the superintendent's belief that principals are key to school reform. This philosophy has manifested itself in two ways: first, the superintendent has put policies and procedures in place to help principals become instructional leaders in their buildings. Through professional development and the expectation that principals spend increasing amounts of time in classrooms (up to one hour per day), the superintendent is creating stronger instructional leaders. Second, most of the district administrators he has hired are former principals and they are required to spend time in schools. The superintendent believes this gives them a realistic perspective and greater insight as they formulate and monitor district policies and procedures to be implemented at the school level.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Overall, student performance is improving in many important areas for both elementary and secondary students. The mean scores of third-graders on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) increased by 6.3 Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs) between 1991-92 and 1996-97. The mean score in each subject area also increased, especially in language skills (11 NCEs) and mathematics (7 NCEs). The mean scores of fifth-graders on the ITBS increased by 2.3 NCEs between 1991-92 and 1996-97. The mean average for language skills was 6 NCEs. Similarly, the percent of sixth-graders who scored a 3 or better (on a scale of 1 to 6) on the New Mexico Portfolio Writing increased from 70 percent to 77 percent between 1993-94 and 1996-97.

At the secondary level, four-year trend data on the New Mexico High School Competency Exam indicates increases in student passing rates for all races and ethnicities in all subjects areas,

except Asians who fell from a 100 percent passing rate to a 93.8 percent passing rate. The dropout rate has decreased from 1993-94 to 1995-96, falling from 11.7 percent to 8.2 percent. (Trend data is not available because of a formula shift during the 1993-94 academic year.) From 1991-92 to 1996-97, district ACT scores have remained constant and are consistent with the national average and above the state average.

STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM

The district is in the process of developing local benchmarks, performance standards, and assessments that are aligned with state standards. It has completed work in social studies, language arts, and mathematics and is currently developing the science curriculum. To develop the curricula, the district established committees of K-12 teachers specializing in the four disciplines and district personnel. These committees compared existing district benchmarks and curricula with the state standards, and adjusted the scope and sequence of the district materials so that students could better meet state standards. Teachers and principals were introduced to the new standards and aligned benchmarks during the 1997-1998 academic year. Teachers began implementing the new standards in 1998.

District administrators indicated that the curriculum has been substantially revised over the past ten years, especially at the high school level, where adjustments had to be made due to block scheduling. The curricula changes included integration of curriculum across disciplines as well as integration of curriculum and vocational studies. Other changes involved inclusion of higher-order skills, tasks, and projects linked to assessments, and inclusion of performance standards. Increasingly, the district is introducing standards to special populations, such as special education students and students with limited-English proficiency.

The district has focused on aligning instructional materials with curriculum. It has produced curriculum guides that include state standards, local benchmarks, activities, performance standards, and suggested time frames. The district recently purchased textbooks in reading and social studies, and comprehensive kits in science, all of which are aligned with the state standards and local benchmarks. In previous years, teachers ordered books at their discretion.

The district recognizes the significance of integrating technology into the curriculum and continually reviews software to ensure alignment. It is currently developing technology competencies that teachers and other personnel will be expected to meet as a routine part of their professional development. To support teachers and other district personnel, the district established a help desk and hired two full-time trainers who work with district personnel, including teachers, principals, district diagnosticians, and others to establish, maintain, and expand computer skills. Teachers are expected to take these skills back to their classrooms and integrate them in their lesson planning. The district is currently in year three of a five-year technology plan and has increased spending on technology each year.

ASSESSMENT

The district employs an array of assessments to determine student achievement levels. According to teachers, it is impossible to teach new material in new ways without new methods of assessment to determine what has been learned. Both the state and the district have understood this, and are consequently moving toward performance-based assessment, which requires students to create projects and/or portfolios of their work to demonstrate mastery of the material.

District tests include the Terra Nova, an open-ended, performance-based test given to sixth- and eighth-graders; algebra placement tests in the sixth and seventh grades; mathematics and English placement tests in the eighth grade; and exit exams in Algebra I and Algebra II. State tests include the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) given to grades 3,5, and 8; the high school competency exam; the New Mexico Portfolio Writing Assessment for grades 4 and 6; and state reading exams given to grades 1 and 2. According to district leaders, every effort is made to test special education and LEP students and only a few students, less than 3%, are excluded from testing. An addition, Goals 2000 money was used to train teachers in how to plan and assess performance-based activities. As a result of their training, many of the teachers interviewed said that they are using more project-like performance-based assignments in their classrooms and evaluating the student products using scoring guides, portfolios, and presentations.

Assessment scores are used to guide instruction, professional development, student placement, principal assessment, and school accountability. Generally, scores are reviewed to help teachers and administrators understand whether specific skills are being taught well. Once this is determined, professional development plans are developed, at either the school or individual teacher level, to strengthen instruction in weaker areas. School improvement teams also rely on data to establish academic goals which are included in school improvement plans. The district also uses scores to place students in ninth-grade English and mathematics courses. Finally, student achievement scores are factored into principal and teacher evaluations and examined to determine whether schools are rewarded or sanctioned by the state.

The evaluation of achievement data is taken seriously in the district. The district's director of evaluation and assessment creates elaborate portfolios containing each school's student achievement data, complete with detailed breakouts, and presents them to school principals. He also makes himself available to principals who request that he make on-site presentations to school faculty. Assessments are also used for public reporting purposes. The Terra Nova is given by the district to students in grades not assessed via the state tests to gauge student progress and pinpoint areas of weakness to be addressed in preparation for future state testing.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

According to its professional development plan, Las Cruces Public Schools supports a comprehensive districtwide staff development program for all employees to provide the adult learning opportunities necessary for effective job performance and improved student learning. Teachers said the goal of professional development in the district is to help teachers better meet

the needs of students. They also indicated that particular professional development goals are often determined by professional development needs assessments administered at the schools.

To support its goals, the district presents professional development notebooks to each school. These notebooks provide information about successful professional development practices and encourage teachers and principals to engage in long-term and collaborative professional development. The district does not promote full-staff workshops but, rather, supports an "individual-focus model" that addresses each teachers' needs as identified in his or her professional development plan and in the goals and objectives of his or her school's plan. According to district administrators, the district uses a "trainer-of-trainer" model, in which a small number of teachers are trained and then charged with training their colleagues in the district. The district encourages teacher collaboration, supporting it financially when possible, and underwriting teacher attendance at local, regional, and national conferences.

Much of the professional development is provided through the Teacher Center, a 20-year-old institution in the district that offers numerous courses, mini courses, workshops, and training sessions to teachers and principals. The Center also:

- Serves as a resource center where teachers can go to make things, use copiers and laminating machines, browse through an education library, and shop at the teacher store.
- Prints a monthly newsletter reporting professional development activities sponsored and/or attended by district personnel, upcoming grant opportunities, and articles on different professional development topics.
- Provides four area specialists (one in mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies who provide technical assistance to teachers and They may facilitate meetings or team work and act as coaches for teachers.
- Provides meeting space for teachers and schools.
- Pays for substitutes when teachers attend sessions during the school day.

The Center, which is partially funded by Title VI monies, is controlled by a policy board composed of teachers, which has increased teacher ownership of the Center. The teachers interviewed had only positive comments about the Center. They appreciated the vast array of resources and offerings at the Center and its school-day, after-school, and Saturday hours of operation. Most importantly, they said that the policies and procedures associated with the Center gave them greater control of their professional growth. For example, if a teacher feels that one of his or her staff development days would be better spent engaged in an activity offered at the Center instead of at a school-sponsored activity, then that teacher has the option of presenting his or her rationale to the principal and attending the session at the Center.

In addition to the Teacher Center, the district also operates a Leadership Academy to address the professional development needs of principals and other building administrators and to offer an introductory course for administrators-in-training. The Academy is coordinated by district administrators and concentrates on five areas: process skills, school improvement, instructional leadership, support and evaluation, and individual growth. Fifteen principals were given $500 in materials for their teachers (books, manuals, videos, etc.) by the district in exchange for participation in weekly sessions. According to the principals, the sessions addressed their professional isolation and were very informative. They said they were able to apply what they learned in their schools immediately, particularly the sessions on instructional leadership.

The content of professional development varies greatly in the district, with topics becoming increasingly more school specific. In individual professional growth plans which are part of their contracts, teachers identify, in conjunction with their principals, areas of study that would improve their performance. They then attend sessions at the Teacher Center that address these areas. The Teacher Center's monthly calendar reveals a variety of professional development activities including new administrator training, various software training (Hyper Studio, Excel, Microsoft Word, etc.), reading, special education disciplinary policies, and science kit training.

A great deal of professional development also occurs at the schools. Schedules are adjusted so teachers have the opportunity to meet across grade levels and as departments, for example. Teachers also go outside of their schools to receive training and then share their training with their peers, according to principals. In one Goals 2000 professional development subgrant, the district distributed the funds to eleven volunteer schools. Two teachers were selected from each school to become school improvement coaches. This group of 22 coaches was charged with studying "best practices" research and sharing what they learned with other teachers in their schools. The coaches received training in adult learning theory, school climate indicators, needs assessment techniques, facilitation tools and techniques, peer coaching and action research, the school improvement planning process, and a variety of other topics.

The district applied other Goals 2000 funds to professional development purposes. Goals 2000 money supported teachers as they developed the eighth grade English and mathematics placement tests. The district used Goals 2000 funds to train one group as reading specialists. This group, called the Reading Cadre, was charged with learning and sharing best practices in the teaching of reading across content areas. According to district administrators, this approach is raising the awareness of teachers at the secondary level fairly well, but is meeting resistance in the elementary schools. Goals 2000 funds also supported the Leadership Academy for principals.

REFORM AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL

The school planning process has changed a great deal in the last few years. Formerly, principals wrote the plans with varying degrees of input from the school community. Currently, school improvement plans are written by a school management team which includes the principal, two teachers, two parents, and a district administrator, who acts as a "critical friend." Individual

teachers, and individual grade levels, also have plans that tie into the school improvement plan, which is linked to the district's strategic plan.

According to teachers and principals we interviewed, the results of the planning have been very positive. Teachers report more collaboration; though the degree of collaboration varies at the school level, teachers noted that collaboration with bilingual and special education programs has increased. Teachers also reported more writing across the curriculum. Teachers are experimenting with performance-based instruction and recognizing the standard curriculum more than before, according to principals. They said teachers are more vested in their work because they have been given greater responsibilities. Teachers agreed. They indicated that they feel safe taking risks, and that the atmosphere in their schools encourages risk-taking.

Goals 2000 funds supported numerous reforms at the school level. It paid for substitutes and stipends for teachers as they engaged in professional development activities. These activities included collaboration and planning across and between grade levels, curriculum writing, and work with performance-based assessment. Goals 2000 funds also supported a districtwide training session for school management and planning teams. During this very important training session, teams learned how to develop and implement school improvement plans which guide the reforms at each school throughout the year.

Community and Family Involvement

The district has a positive relationship with the school community. The passage of three bonds for technological innovation is one example of public confidence in the system. The district involves the school community in the reform effort through its Instructional Council. Composed of teachers, administrators, local governmental agency representatives, and business leaders, the Instructional Council reviews progress and revises the EPSS annually. The Council also monitors the implementation of school plans.

In addition, the district is working cooperatively with the Doña Ana Workforce Action Council (DWAC). The DWAC is a nonprofit organization, whose goal is to integrate the needs of the business world with the education and career needs of students. DWAC is composed of representatives from the business sector, local government agencies, and educators. DWAC has developed programs that prepare students for employment in banking and finance, health care services, hospitality and tourism, agriculture and manufacturing. Through close work with local school systems, DWAC developed "career maps" which identify high school and college courses needed to pursue employment in each of the five fields. In some cases, courses already existed and in some cases they were designed and tailored to meet workforce requirements. In addition, in banking and finance, DWAC established a limited number of internships with local businesses, such as, banks, for interested high school students.

The district encourages parental involvement in numerous ways. The Department of Alternative Education, located in the Las Cruces School District, offers support groups, parent centers, and educational classes to the parents of at-risk students. The department oversees four alternative

sites for students who have attendance, behavior and/or substance abuse problems. It launched a GED program last year and in the fall will open a new site for students who have been recently adjudicated. The Department also provides "home liaisons" who conduct home visits and support at-risk students as they transition back to their home schools. Interestingly enough, these positions are funded through Medicaid.

The district also has a longstanding policy supporting high school level parent-teacher and parent-teacher-student organizations. It also requires that principals appoint a parent advisory committee to provide parental and community input in school- and district-wide programs. In addition to these policies, the district encourages principals to establish parent centers at their schools. The district provides a portable classroom that can be converted into a parent center for schools that do not have enough space to devote to a parent center. In the centers, schools offer parenting classes, literacy classes, and other sessions that might be of interest to parents. The vast majority of the school principals voted to hire full-time counselors or social workers to strengthen school-family-community partnerships.

Principals feel that the district is moving in the right direction, citing increases in family involvement as evidence. Teachers in the district concur, saying that community and family members are much more involved in school planning now than they were in the past.

Overall Successes and Challenges

Las Cruces Public Schools has achieved success in several areas. According to the superintendent, a major success is the number of alternative programs the district offers to its students. As indicated earlier, the district's Department of Alternative Education offers programs for students with attendance, behavioral, and substance abuse problems. In addition, the district has programs for migrant students and for low-achieving eighth- and ninth-grade students. The superintendent feels that these programs demonstrate the district's commitment to helping every student increase his/her academic achievement.

The superintendent also explained that the entire district is focused on increasing student achievement, that everyone understands and is working toward alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to achieve that end. According to the curriculum coordinator, a major success in the areas of standards and curriculum is teachers' recognition and use of the district curriculum. She feels that teachers know that they "just can't close the door anymore." District administrators and principals agree, reporting that as teachers received professional development in teaching the standards and curriculum, teaching changed. Principals, teachers, and district administrators said that a good deal of the teaching in the district now involves more collaboration, increased use of data to plan instruction, and more performance-based learning.

All interviewees indicated that the Teacher Center has been and continues to be an extremely successful component of the district's professional development program. District administrators believe that teachers are taking on more responsibility in their work, in part because they are more in control of their professional growth.

Another success is that the superintendent's leadership focused principals' attention on the use of assessment data in school decision-making, according to the district administrators. As a result, principals use achievement data in staff meetings and conferences with teachers. Through data analysis, principals identify student and teacher strengths and weaknesses, both between and across grade levels, and act accordingly.

The district faces many challenges. Though many teachers are using the new standards and curricula, gaining the buy-in of all teachers in the district remains a challenge. In the district's assessment policy, the biggest challenge is aligning assessments with reforms in curriculum and instruction. The district recently began giving the Terra Nova exam in place of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) in an effort to more closely align assessment with the standards and curricula. In addition, administrators and teachers indicated that a major challenge is identifying a standard procedure for measuring performance-based assessment. Regarding professional development, the most significant challenges are finding the time and money needed to maintain the momentum of the reform effort, and working with teachers to help them change their instructional techniques. Administrators believe that professional development that involves increased collaboration is supporting teachers in this effort.

Another challenge faced by the district is finding the balance between the provision of information and resources that prevent schools from "recreating the wheel" while at the same time honoring site-based management. A final challenge, according to one administrator, is to continue to use assessment scores to promote achievement without allowing assessment scores to narrow the focus of instruction or pit schools against each other.

GOALS 2000 SUBGRANTS

Grant name	Grant amount	Year	Emphasis
Local education reform	$50,000 $45,000 $50,000	1995 1996 1997	Distributed mini-grants to schools to develop and implement their school improvement plans. Supported a districtwide Instructional Council which refined and monitored the implementation of the district strategic plan and school plans
Preservice	$16,000	1995	Used to initiate a professional development school model with New Mexico State University.
Professional development	$45,000	1997	Used to build collaborative school teams and to initiate site-based staff development through peer coaching and action research. Twenty-two coaches were trained and then worked in teams of two at eleven schools

MAINE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT #27

MAINE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT (MSAD) #27 is located in Fort Kent, Maine, on the U.S.-Canadian border. The district's 1,377 students are instructed by 109 teachers in three elementary schools serving students in pre-K through grade 8, one elementary school serving students in pre-K through grade 6, and one high school serving students in grades 9 through 12. Ninety-nine percent of the students are white and forty-eight percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. With a budget of slightly over $8 million, the district encompasses seven small rural towns spanning 64 square miles in northern Aroostook County: Eagle Lake, Fort Kent, New Canada, St. Francis, St. John, Wallagrass, and Winterville. School and district staff describe this northernmost county of Maine, with thirteen people e per square mile, as one of the least populated and most geographically isolated regions in the state. According to the 1990 census, over two-thirds of the district population speak both English and French.

In 1991, MSAD #27 was selected, along with four other school systems in Maine, to work with liaisons and staff from the Maine Aspirations Foundation, a statewide nonprofit organization, and the UNUM Insurance Company, to reform elementary and secondary education. Eight individuals from the Fort Kent area, representing a variety of stakeholders, formed a steering committee to restructure the district. In this unusual five-year business and education partnership, the Maine Aspirations Foundation and UNUM provided technical assistance, including a UNUM consultant skilled in strategic planning and group process, for the reform process.

The steering committee invited interested community members, parents, staff, students, and other stakeholders to join the Future Education Planning Compact, the district's strategic planning group. Over 60 participants received training in total quality management and other capacity-building processes and set goals for the school system. The group researched the needs of students in the future, conducted local needs assessments, and began to develop a vision statement, goals, and action plans to guide the district's reform for the next five years. The UNUM consultant assisted in each step of the effort. Working groups developed action plans in curriculum, instruction, evaluation, public relations, community involvement, and other areas. In 1994, the fully developed vision statement was approved by the school board and implementation teams were put into action.

The superintendent explained that the district's overall reform goal is to increase student academic achievement and "raise the bar" for all students. She recognizes that staff development is key to achieving these reform goals. She believes that the district's very experienced but fairly traditional teaching staff needed exposure and practical understanding of new standards and new instructional methods. Through her leadership, the district chose to use Goals 2000 funds to involve lead teachers in learning about and then disseminating new approaches throughout the district. The Goals 2000 funds, according to the superintendent, became "the glue that holds the district's initiatives together."

Student Outcomes

Student scores on the Maine Educational Assessment (MEA) compare favorably with statewide averages. In 1997, average grade-4 scores in reading, writing, and humanities exceeded state averages by an average of 15 points, and scores in science and health equaled state averages. That same year eighth-grade averages surpassed state averages in reading, science, humanities, and health. District averages for eleventh-graders exceeded state averages in reading, writing, mathematics, and humanities, with a dramatic difference in writing of 45 points.

The district is particularly proud of trends in MEA scores among students as they advance from grade 4 to grade 8 to grade 11 – those grades assessed with the MEA. As the class of 1998 progressed through the school system, their test scores increased at each assessment level. The students' grade-4 average scores in 1990 were below the state averages in reading, mathematics, science, and the humanities. By eighth grade, these same students had achieved higher average scores than their state counterparts in writing and humanities; by eleventh grade, they had surpassed state averages scores in writing, humanities, reading, and mathematics. In a district with little student mobility, these data demonstrate increasing student achievement.

Standards and Curriculum

MSAD #27 began developing local standards approximately eight years ago, at the same time that Maine started to create its standards, called Learning Results. All teachers and principals were involved in this effort, which was led by the five curriculum leaders. Collaborating in content-area teams (i.e., all pre-K through grade 12 science teachers), school-level staff identified what students should know and be able to do by end of grade 12, then worked backwards to create local standards. The local standards, also called Learning Results, include content standards and performance indicators defined in grade-level clusters (such as pre-K through grade 2 and grades 3 through 5) for nine subject areas. When the state's Learning Results were released in 1996, the content-area teams and curriculum leaders, five teachers trained in curriculum development, aligned the local and state standards.

According to district and school staff, the local standards are more detailed and therefore more practical than the state standards. The local standards also include a technology component while the state standards do not. According to curriculum leaders and the superintendent, the impetus for creating local standards, rather than aligning local curriculum with the state standards – as some surrounding districts did – was to develop district ownership of the standards. Although the curriculum leaders recalled that developing local standards was "painful" for some teachers and principals who did not feel qualified to do the work, the district viewed the involvement of teachers and principals in standards development as critical to successful implementation of the standards.

Other teams of teachers and principals, organized into grade-level and/or content-area clusters (depending on whether the teachers work at the pre-K through grade 8 or at the secondary school

level), are in the process of aligning the curriculum with the local standards. Under the curriculum leaders' direction, they have also identified gaps and overlaps in the pre-K through grade 12 curriculum for each subject area. All teachers and administrators are required to participate on both the pre-K through grade 12 content-area teams (also called vertical teams), which developed and disseminated the standards, and in grade-level clusters and/or teams (also called horizontal teams), which are aligning the curriculum with the standards and developing performance-based assessment tasks.

The teachers on the content-area teams were charged with sharing the standards with their colleagues at their schools. The district also posted the standards on its web site. However, it has been through teachers' work in creating and using performance-based assessment tasks that instructional staff have been brought directly into contact with the standards. These tasks require students to demonstrate their knowledge of the standards, using projects, portfolios, and other alternative measures of assessment. Because the performance-based assessment tasks are interdisciplinary and well aligned with the standards, the curriculum leaders believe that the use of performance-based assessment will assist teachers in covering all of the Learning Results for each year.

Supported by Goals 2000 funds, the curriculum leaders planned and provided professional development to the rest of the staff. Goals 2000 funds allowed curriculum leaders and grade-level team leaders to attend a "planning backwards" workshop conducted by the state Department of Education. The workshop helped teachers plan lessons by identifying the content standards, performance indicators, and assessment methods for a particular subject area and then developing related classroom activities. Designed to help teachers learn how to make standards central to instruction, the "planning backwards" strategy was demonstrated to all MSAD #27 teachers and principals during a districtwide inservice conducted by the curriculum leaders.

ASSESSMENT

Maine requires that students in grades 4, 8, and 11 take the Maine Educational Assessment (MEA) in reading, writing, and mathematics. This examination, currently consisting entirely of open-response questions, is considered fairly well aligned with the state standards, which were adopted in 1997. MEA scores are reported by district, by school, and by individual student, both numerically and by performance levels (novice, basic, advanced, or distinguished). The district requires students in grades 1-3, 5, 7, and 9 to take the California Achievement Test in core subjects. The district also gives the Iowa Algebra Test to students in grades 7 and 8, and tests of mathematics and reading ability to lower-elementary level students to determine readiness or placement.

Results on the California Achievement Test and the Maine Educational Assessment are used by the district and by some individual staff members to identify trends and develop goals for student performance. To improve their use of assessment data, in 1997, principals and teachers attended a full-day inservice on how to analyze Maine Educational Assessment results. The curriculum leaders compiled these data by school and presented the information, in an accessible format, to

teachers and principals. They reviewed the data together and established the basis for an improvement plan for each school. In addition, at this inservice, the pre-K through grade 12 content-area teams in literacy and mathematics examined Maine Educational Assessment results in those areas and developed district improvement plans. The superintendent feels that the assessment inservice which was supported by Goals 2000 funds, "established a common vocabulary" that will enhance data analysis throughout the district. Teachers and principals agree that the district is now focused on using many kinds of student performance data to set goals and monitor progress.

MSAD #27 emphasized the use of performance-based assessment as a planning and instructional tool to help teachers and students use the new standards effectively. In 1997, curriculum leaders used Goals 2000 funds to create a model set of performance-based assessment tasks – project-oriented "real-life" tasks that assess student work and are based on the local standards. These tasks were linked to the local Learning Results through the use of a planning framework created by the curriculum leaders. The curriculum leaders designed the model tasks to demonstrate that instructional assessment should make connections to students' communities and cultural heritage.

Goals 2000 subgrants supported several other district initiatives in assessment. Grade-level teams met during release time, provided by Goals 2000 funds, to develop another set of interdisciplinary units, which were shared with other teachers during districtwide inservices. The Goals 2000 reflective practice subgrant helped the curriculum leaders study and assess their progress with the interdisciplinary units. Goals 2000 funds also allowed the curriculum leaders to survey others, including the director of student services (and special education), to gain knowledge of current assessment practices in the district and to compare it with the "Principles and Indicators for Student Assessment Systems" from the National Forum on Assessment. This investigation produced valuable information which serves as a foundation for continued work on a local assessment measure. In addition, Goals 2000 funds also supported pilots of portfolio assessments in mathematics and literacy in selected classrooms.

Professional Development

Few of MSAD #27's teachers have advanced degrees, and the nearest university that provides graduate credit to teachers is 180 miles away. Therefore, Goals 2000 funds have been "critical to raising the level of teacher knowledge" about standards and authentic assessment throughout the district, said the superintendent. All five Goals 2000 subgrants have provided release time, salaries, and stipends for curriculum leaders and other team leaders to provide and/or facilitate most of the professional development in the district.

The first major districtwide professional development effort linked to standards-based reform predates the Goals 2000 subgrants, however. Starting in 1992, all instructional staff were trained in "Dimensions of Learning." This research-based instructional program details instructional strategies teachers can use to improve students' learning skills. The strategies are broad enough to apply to all content areas and all levels. They include facilitating the following:

- Positive attitudes and perceptions about learning;
- Thinking involved in acquiring and integrating knowledge;
- Thinking involved in extending and refining knowledge;
- Thinking involved in using knowledge meaningfully; and
- Productive habits of mind.

Sixteen teacher leaders were trained in three-day workshops, and then the rest of the staff was trained by the teacher leaders. It took two to three years to train the entire district. Now, Dimensions is an important element of district culture. In interviews, principals and teachers described Dimensions as the "how" to teach and the local (and state) Learning Results as the "what" to teach. The superintendent says Dimensions laid a foundation for the standards, helping teachers to focus on what and how students learn rather than what teachers teach.

Now, with Goals 2000 funds, the district is devoting more time to professional development. However, as with the Dimensions of Learning training, the district proceeds slowly with professional development to ensure its success. Three of the six annual inservice days – up from four days in previous years – have been devoted to work in teams on developing and scoring performance tasks, for example, and teachers have been through this process two times to gain experience. Professional development on instructional planning, effective leadership, change processes, and the development and use of performance-based assessment is also provided.

Through a new teacher evaluation system, teachers can now use professional development work as evidence of meeting their self-improvement plans. To develop their plans, teachers must get feedback from students and parents and refer to student test scores and their own observations of student achievement. Teachers' plans must also reflect the district vision. Building administrators confirm and amend the teachers' plans and facilitate their implementation by making requests for on-site staff development. (Principals' evaluation is also tied to student achievement.) The superintendent says the system is just the first of many shifts toward greater accountability. Teachers also approach their principals or the curriculum leaders to identify professional development offerings that help them in the recertification process, which must be completed every five years.

MSAD #27 emphasized the use of performance-based assessment as a planning and instructional tool to help teachers use the new standards effectively. In 1997, curriculum leaders used Goals 2000 funds to create a model set of performance-based assessment tasks – project-oriented "real-life" tasks that assess student work and are based on the local standards. These tasks were linked to the local Learning Results through the use of a planning framework created by the curriculum leaders. The model tasks focused on local history about German prisoners of war who were confined in Aroostook County during World War II. Teachers and students were required to do a variety of authentic assessment tasks, such as to write and perform original scripts and to calculate the nutritional value of foods produced on farms where the prisoners-of-war often worked. The model tasks were designed to demonstrate that instructional assessment should make connections to students' communities and cultural heritage.

In the summer of 1998 the district received a $30,000 Technology Literacy Challenge Fund grant which will contribute to two projects. In one, ten staff members will attend a conference on equity of access to technology for disabled and disenfranchised learners, and then share what they learn with their colleagues. In the second project, the district's technology coordinator will create a training sequence in collaboration with the curriculum leaders. The training will help teachers implement the technology standards in combination with the content covered in the local Learning Results. Nine teachers will be trained to conduct this training at the campuses.

Reform at the School Level

When asked about reform at their campuses, teachers and principals discussed district-level, rather than school-level, activities which have influenced how school staff behave and view their role in the district. Instead of focusing on enhancing site-based management (as have other promising districts), MSAD #27 – due to its size, history, and the distribution of its schools – has chosen to bring together educators from across the district.

According to the superintendent, the district's collaborative efforts have resulted in a more cohesive district. Although implementation varies, instructional and administrative staff agree that teachers are using Dimensions of Learning, performance assessment, and the Learning Results in their planning and instruction. Cooperative learning and heterogeneous grouping are also more prevalent in the schools as a result of the reform effort. According to one teacher, instructors are learning to be less "the sage on the stage and more the guide on the side." The framework to guide performance task development has had mixed success, however. Teachers found it too wordy and complicated to be useful on a regular basis. Teachers and principals said staff isolation has decreased as a result of the mandatory collaboration among instructors and principals across the district. This teamwork has encouraged dialogue and respect between teachers at different schools and at different grade levels.

And while the district has become more cohesive, principals say they have more autonomy at their buildings. They make more financial decisions and deal with parents at their campuses without having to refer these issues to the district office. Individual school plans developed by principals and teachers also remain tailored to the individual schools' needs. Principals say that they are more involved in instruction as a result of their participation on districtwide teams. Also, classroom responsibilities for the three teaching principals in the district have been reduced to give them time to assume new leadership roles.

Family involvement. Three goals for parent education emerged from the district's initial restructuring process:

- to develop parenting skills and learning awareness among parents of preschoolers;
- to help parents understand a rapidly changing world so they can help their children develop; and
- to provide opportunities for parents, teachers, and community members to better understand and use technology.

Parent involvement is encouraged by the district through communication about educational issues through a variety of methods. The district held annual Family/Parent Summits on topics such as the state and local Learning Results. Approximately 200 parents attended each of these summits. In addition, the district publishes a newsletter, and each school publishes regular communications for parents. Board meetings are televised and parents provide input on teacher evaluations by completing surveys. Parents also continue to participate in the FEPC partnership.

Overall Successes and Challenges

The superintendent's leadership, the Board of Directors' support, and the work of the FEPC have been instrumental in implementing the district's vision of reform. But the most influential and unique aspect of MSAD #27's reform effort is the impact of teachers and principals working in content-area, grade-level, and curriculum leadership teams. According to those interviewed, the collective work and cooperative spirit of these teams aided the district in becoming a more focused and effective organization.

Principals reported that the Learning Results have replaced the textbook as the source of lesson planning. Curriculum leaders indicated that the district's success in curriculum reform was due to the high level of teacher involvement, the superintendent's support, the strong work ethic among teachers, and the small size of the district.

The district was successful in introducing performance-based assessment to its teachers. All teachers and administrators in the district have had the opportunity to work in grade-level teams to create, use, and score two sets of interdisciplinary units that include tasks for each grade-level cluster; some teachers have been involved in piloting the use of student portfolios. "We may not have used scoring guides independently," said one teacher.

Still, the district faces a number of challenges to its assessment effort. Gaining buy-in from the teachers who are reluctant to use scoring guides is a large obstacle. Many teachers do not see performance-based assessment as an integral aspect of instruction, according to curriculum leaders. Meanwhile, the district struggles to find time for teachers to develop and score the performance assessment tasks. Despite these challenges, the district has taken ambitious steps toward the implementation of a local assessment policy.

MSAD #27 views the teachers' and administrators' participation in developing and aligning curriculum and assessment as the best professional development opportunity offered by the district. Through their participation in the content-area and grade-level teams, school staff gained in-depth knowledge of the standards and the development of assessment measures. The grade-level meetings, in particular, allowed staff members to take leadership roles in new areas. Goals 2000-funded inservices and work during release time have brought together teachers from different schools and grades, which has increased teacher collaboration and enhanced professional dialogue in the district. Finding time and resources to address professional development needs is a major challenge, according to the superintendent. Teachers said they need more planning time to accomplish all the new work they have been given.

In spite of the many successes, teachers and principals identified several challenges to implementing school-level reform. Teachers said the home circumstances of some of their students made learning difficult. This is especially the case for students from the two foster homes which were recently opened in the district. According to the superintendent, children from these homes require resources and attention that challenge teachers' ability to serve all of the students in their classes. Teachers consult guidance counselors but contend that they need more help and increased involvement from other agencies. Another challenge faced by the district is that in its smallest outlying schools, the teachers who work in multi-grade classrooms need extra planning time and support to implement reforms for each group of students in their classes.

GOALS 2000 SUBGRANTS

Grant name	Grant amount	Year	Emphasis
Implementation Subgrant	$59,339	1996	Used to relieve two teachers of classroom responsibilities so that they could fill positions as curriculum resource teachers. Also used to support districtwide training in a pedagogical approach called Dimensions of Learning.
State Assessment Pilot Subgrant	$75,000	1997	Used by curriculum leaders to research best practices in assessment and coordinate the creation and field-testing of a local districtwide performance-based assessment.
Reflective Practice Subgrant	$2,000	1997	Used by curriculum leaders to extend their regular meeting times in order to incorporate self-assessment and reflective practice into their efforts
Implementation Subgrant	$30,000	1997	Used by curriculum leaders to continue aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Also used to inform school community members about the local standards and assessments.
Consortium Subgrant	$17,5000	1997	Shared with three other districts, provided $9,975 for formal training in instructional planning that is linked to the state standards. Also used to establish a support network between the participating school systems.

THE MCALLEN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT (MISD)

THE MCALLEN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT (MISD) is located in McAllen, Texas. McAllen is a fast-growing city in the southern tip of Texas with a population of 100,000. MISD serves 21,704 students in eighteen elementary schools, six middle schools, four high schools, and three alternative schools. Eighty-seven percent of the students are Hispanic and eleven percent are white. Thirty-four percent of the students are limited-English proficient and 62 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. The teaching staff numbers 1,456.Thirty-six percent of the students participate in the district's Bilingual/ESL program and eleven percent are in the special education program.

In 1994, the MISD Board of Trustees worked with district administrators to develop and adopt a mission statement and general goals to frame a five-year strategic plan. The mission statement stresses that MISD will provide a "flexible, student-centered learning environment which meets the needs of each student" through collaboration with parents and other community members. Included in the strategic plan is the district's goal of attaining "exemplary" status in the state's system for rating districts. (Currently, the district is "recognized.") The strategic plan is reviewed annually by the superintendent, key administrators, and board members. Specific recommendations for change are made by the District Strategic Planning Council, which consists of approximately 80 individuals, including parents, board members, key organizations and agencies, students, teachers, principals, and central office administrators.

While developing the strategic plan, the district contracted with university researchers to conduct two studies to assist the district in setting goals and policy in two targeted areas: early childhood education and bilingual and English-as-a-second language (ESL) education. The major findings of the early childhood education study, completed in 1994, included:

- Principals lacked knowledge of child development;
- A strong orientation toward grade-level expectations among teachers sometimes interfered with children's development;
- More collaboration was needed among teachers, administrators, and curriculum specialists, particularly in language arts; and
- Additional training and materials were needed.

In the bilingual and ESL education study, also completed in 1994, the researchers found that respondents did not understand bilingual and ESL education issues, and that the absence of a foundation for these programs by the district and schools was impending their implementation. The studies established direction for the district's bilingual and ESL and early childhood efforts and gave the district a head start in developing and implementing Academics 2000, the state's Goals 2000 reform effort.

Academics 2000 is designed to ensure that all Texas students master reading, English/language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science by the fourth grade. Since 1994, the Academics

2000 effort has emphasized reading as the foundation for learning in all subjects. School districts receive Academics 2000 subgrants to implement the Academics 2000 program. "Right from the Start," McAllen's local Academics 2000 initiative, is designed to increase student achievement in prekindergarten through fourth grade by improving professional development and restructuring elementary education.

The district targeted specific elementary schools for participation in "Right from the Start," adding more schools with each successive Academics 2000 grant. By 1999, the district will have received three 5-year Academics 2000 grants and all but one of the district's 18 elementary schools will be Academics 2000 schools. Schools rated "exemplary" by the state were paired with the schools with low assessment scores to share successful policies and practices. The district targeted the majority of funds from each of its Academics 2000 grants to the lower-achieving schools. Though concentrating in the selected schools, the district uses the initiative to implement changes that affect the entire district.

Student Outcomes

Gains have been made in Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) scores at the elementary level in MISD, where Goals 2000 funds have been targeted, as well as in the overall state ratings of the district and individual schools. More fourth-graders (not including special education students) have passed the reading section each year from 1996 to 1998, with an increase of nearly 10 percent over that time. Third- and fifth-graders have made gains of 9 percent and 4 percent, respectively, between their 1997 and 1998 reading tests. In mathematics, increasingly more students in grades three through five have passed the TAAS each year from 1995 to 1998.11 percent more third-graders are passing, 15.6 percent more fourth-graders are passing, and 16.5 percent more fifth-graders are passing. On the writing exam, which is administered to fourth-graders, scores have remained fairly stable, with approximately 88 percent passing.

Students with limited-English proficiency (LEP), in particular, have made impressive gains. In 1995, 27 percent of LEP students in third grade passed the reading component; by 1998, 70 percent had passed. In fourth grade, 44 percent passed in 1996 and 77 percent passed in 1998. The percent of LEP students in fifth grade passing the reading test climbed from 56 percent in 1997 to 72 percent in 1998. In 1998, significantly more LEP students are also passing the mathematics section than in 1995.

Standards and Curriculum

Findings from MISD's 1994 early childhood study about curriculum needs led the district to develop a new elementary curriculum. This curriculum, created by teachers and completed in 1996, is used currently by teachers in first through fifth grade. It is an interdisciplinary curriculum based on findings from research on brain development and functioning, constructivist theories of knowledge, and Heidi Hayes Jacobs' work on connected disciplines. The curriculum is organized into six-week units, each based on a theme, such as "facing challenges," that is

linked to a reading selection from the district-adopted basal. Activities in reading and six other content areas are suggested, and real-world contexts are stressed whenever possible. Manipulatives and activities are included in the curriculum. Units written in Spanish are used in the bilingual program.

In 1997 the state board of education approved the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, or TEKS, the first major rewrite of the state standards since 1983. To operationalize the TEKS, teachers in the district formed curriculum design teams and translated each standard into what the district calls "performance expectations." For example, to demonstrate active listening in a variety of settings, an eighth-grade standard, a student might identify the purposes for listening (such as to gain information, to solve problems, etc.), recall the major ideas and supporting evidence in spoken messages through oral discussions, and/or take notes and summarize while listening to spoken messages. The district also received assistance and examples of performance expectations from one of the regional service centers created by the state to assist districts in implementing the TEKS. Approximately 300 teachers, representing all grades and content areas as well as special programs such as counseling, participated in the process of revising the curriculum.

The curriculum design teams also sought to integrate the district's own goals for its graduates into the curriculum. These twelve goals, called "commencement goals," were developed in 1995 by teachers and represent what MISD wants all of its students to achieve by graduation. The goals focus on content, process skills, and valuable personal characteristics. The goals are re-evaluated each year by professional staff, parents, and business/community members.

Members of the curriculum design teams received training on how to create units for each topic covered in the standards. This training involved a computer-based system the district is using to develop and eventually implement its curriculum. Created by a private company, the system, called Results-Based Educational Model, or R-BEM, was discovered by the assistant superintendent at a state regional service center. She appreciated that R-BEM could be tailored to MISD's needs and eventually be used by teachers, at their desktop computers, to track coverage of a particular TEKS performance expectation.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment goals drive much of the reform effort in MISD. Every school, and the district, sets itself the goal of being rated as "exemplary" by the state and establishes additional performance targets for specific groups of students, such as LEP students. The Academics 2000 initiative encouraged the use of diagnostic assessments and the creation of assessments that are better suited to elementary students, such as performance-based measures, which require students to demonstrate mastery by doing project-like tasks. The district is also creating local assessments to support reform.

The state takes stock of student performance through its use of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, or TAAS. Reading and mathematics components of the TAAS are given each

spring to students in grades 3 through 10. The state also administers a writing component to students in grades 4, 8, and 10. In addition, to receive a diploma, students must pass the tenth-grade TAAS as well as end-of-course exams in Algebra I, Biology I, English II, and U.S. History. Second-graders in McAllen are tested using the Iowa Test for Basic Skills.

The state's commitment to improving the achievement of all students is exemplified by a number of policies related to the TAAS. All district and school scores are reported using racial and economic class breakouts, and, more significantly, the state bases its ratings on the TAAS scores of each of these groups of students – African-American, Hispanic, white, and economically disadvantaged groups – as well as on the total population's scores. Thus, to receive the exemplary rating, 90 percent of all students and 90 percent of the students in each of these groups must pass both sections of the TAAS. (Other requirements must be met to receive this rating.) The state also increased the percentage of students who must pass the TAAS each year to earn the each rating, thereby "raising the bar" for all students. And, starting next year, the state will require that scores of special education and LEP students be included in the accountability rating system.

In several areas of assessment policy, MISD stayed one step ahead of the state. The district started testing special education students two years ago (well in advance of the state's upcoming changes) and monitoring LEP students' scores, which will also be figured into accountability ratings next year. Because of these district practices, the director of research and evaluation predicts that unlike other districts, MISD's TAAS results will not dip when the state changes come into effect. And, although the state combines grade-3 through grade-5 TAAS scores for accountability purposes, the district breaks down elementary student TAAS scores by grade level and uses these grade-level data for school planning. In addition, district teachers are creating proxy tests in mathematics, based on TAAS items, to help instructors gauge student progress in advance of the official test date. Unit tests, to be used with the new curriculum, are also being prepared and aligned with the TAAS.

State test data are studied intensely in MISD. The district is working on a TAAS Analysis Project, in which teachers analyze student test scores from the previous two years, looking carefully at weaknesses and how these correlate with their curriculum. Through the district's research and evaluation department, teachers receive the previous year's test data for their students in advance of the start of classes, to assist in planning. In addition, the district has been engaged in an examination of content of the TAAS items so as to better understand the knowledge and skills that are assessed with the test. In this way, the district expects to help each school set reasonable targets in its school plan. Through site planning, parents and other stakeholders become involved in setting these targets. They also review test scores in the mail, in newspapers, and on the Internet.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In 1994, the district started conducting needs assessments to determine how to best meet the professional development goals of individual schools. These needs assessments are now

administered regularly to determine topics for professional development. In addition, each school develops its own professional development plan, which must be linked to the district's overall professional development plan.

A broad range of topics, determined through needs assessments, have been the subject of Academics 2000-sponsored professional development. According to the early childhood education program manager, the first grant developed teachers' understanding of global topics such as brain-compatible learning, learning styles, and Multiple Intelligences theory, as well as Project Approach (project-based learning for upper-elementary students) and Developmentally Appropriate Practices. Other topics included training in High/Scope, a child-oriented approach for prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers, multimedia technology, Reading Recovery strategies (in English and Spanish), bilingual/ESL education, interdisciplinary teaching and learning, and alternative assessment, among others. Through the regular district offerings, Academics 2000 teachers participated in professional development on the TEKS, discipline-specific offerings, and other topics.

Academics 2000 funds were used to provide stipends for two instructors per grade level at each school to attend sessions during the academic year. These teachers are then responsible for disseminating the training to their colleagues at their schools. Additional stipends are given to teachers at Academics 2000 schools for professional development during the year and for summer institutes. Other special offerings are made through the Teacher Academy and at individual schools. District administrators and school-level staff emphasized that Academics 2000 professional development has always been made available to staff at all schools when space permitted.

To strengthen the bilingual and ESL education programs, which were targeted for change as a result of the contracted study, the district has relied on enhanced staff development. Some of this staff development was provided as a result of a working agreement with the U.S. Office of Civil Rights, which began in 1996. This agreement has made the district a model for a strengthened bilingual/ESL plan, with targeted professional development and a thorough school evaluation process. As a result, all elementary language arts teachers are ESL endorsed, and instructional aides as well as teachers have received intensive professional development on teaching LEP students.

The district offers three academies for staff development: the Administrator Academy, the Leadership Development Academy, and the Teacher Academy. As recommended by the early childhood study, principals and facilitators have received intensive training through the Academy in developmentally appropriate practices, research in early childhood education, and other curriculum issues. The Leadership Development Academy helps prepare teachers and other MISD employees for leadership opportunities. It offers courses on management, leadership, curriculum and instruction, and other topics. The Teacher Academy provides curriculum and instruction training to teachers, instructional aides, librarians, counselors, and parent involvement specialists. Staff attend the academies during seven official staff development days during the academic year and three to five days during the summer.

Teachers, coordinators, directors, and administrators conduct staff development sessions as often as possible. The "trainer-of-trainers" approach – in which a small number of lead teachers are trained and then charged with sharing that training with their colleagues – is used extensively in the Academics 2000 schools and is now employed throughout the district. The district also brings in university staff and outside consultants to provide staff development, and will send teachers to conferences and other courses outside of the district.

Academics 2000 funds also purchased human development training modules, or training kits. These modules have been used by the parental involvement specialist (an individual assigned to strengthen the home/school connection) at each school with parents, school staff, and children. These modules describe the stages of human development and cover topics such as self-esteem and communication.

Changes have occurred in the administration and evaluation of professional development, according to those interviewed. Principals and district administrators agree that few "one-shot" sessions are offered currently; professional development is now longer and more continuous. Administrators also report more frequent and informative evaluation of professional development occurs throughout the district.

These changes in staff development, and the increased offerings, influenced elementary-level instruction, according to many interviewees. Teachers are more likely to use hands-on strategies than drill-and-practice techniques and focus more on higher-order thinking. They are more self-conscious about how they deal with students' learning styles and about the learning environment created in their classrooms. One administrator reported that the emphasis on ESL strategies has increased the level of Spanish proficiency in the schools. And the teachers in the Academics 2000 schools, which received multimedia equipment through the subgrant, indicated that technology is used for instruction more frequently and with more sophistication.

TECHNOLOGY

MISD has developed ambitious plans for the instructional uses of technology, much of which has been supported through Academics 2000. Initially, the district has focused on the elementary schools. The Academics 2000 initiative has provided computers, extensive professional development, and multimedia equipment for elementary school staff. Each Academics 2000 school received a multimedia cart with a scanner, Quick-Take camera, VCR, and television to facilitate the use of technology in classrooms.The district has also blended Title I funds and local grants to sustain its technology efforts and is hoping to receive an additional $3.2 million from the E-rate program in the near future to network the rest of its classrooms. The district is working toward putting up to six computers in each middle and high school classroom.

The immediate goal is to get instructional staff comfortable with technology and then begin full-scale implementation in the classrooms. Teachers of all grade levels have received comprehensive after-school training in technology at the curriculum and design center, a 26-computer lab created in 1995. (A second, similar center will be built next year.) The district

technology coordinator and her staff of two provide three levels of training to teachers and paraprofessionals, helping to create a built-in support system for the teacher experimenting with technology for the first time. This training covers the use of databases, spreadsheets, Power Point, word processing, the Internet for lesson-planning, Hyper Studio, and the use of audiovisual equipment. Every Academics 2000 teacher who completes all three levels of training receives a Macintosh computer, an effective incentive already for five hundred teachers since the first Academics 2000 grant. Teachers who receive technology training are responsible for sharing the training with colleagues at their individual schools. To reinforce the training and support the instructional use of technology, two teachers at each school are designated helpers, and eight technology specialists provide follow up and troubleshooting at schools throughout the district.

REFORM AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL

With the early childhood education action plan developed by district and school administrators as a general outline for improvement, the Academics 2000 schools collaborated in studying and discussing "best practices" research in early childhood education. The schools identified specific methods for implementing the plan. This collaboration eventually led each school to incorporate the district-level action plan into its school plan, resulting in many kinds of school change at the participating sites.

According to district staff at Academics 2000 schools, the organization of some schools changed to include more multi-age classrooms and "family" grouping, in which cohorts of multi-age students move together from one grade to the next. Looping, in which students move through the school system as a cohort and sometimes retain the same primary teacher, is more prevalent. Some schools extended or modified the school day to maximize learning time, particularly for reading. Teaching practice also changed, with more use of authentic assessment measures such as portfolios and more engagement with higher-level thinking in the classroom. The curriculum has become more child-centered, with teachers serving as facilitators. School staff credited the Academics 2000 staff development – and in some cases simply the time spent learning together – with the increased teamwork within and across grade levels they have experienced.

In addition to these instructional changes, many Academics 2000 schools also developed close ties with parents and community members. In one school, parents, students, staff, and community work together in a micro-society, or "school-within-a-school," to develop and implement business-related curricula and to strengthen school-business partnerships. The school also partnered with local community organizations, which led to greater parental involvement. In another school, a "Parents as Partners" program brought parents into the classroom for guidance on helping their children learn at home. Each week, parents from a targeted grade level attend the sessions together.

An important school-level change is the emphasis on data analysis and evaluation, which mirrors the district's efforts in this area. Principals noted that teachers have become more sophisticated at using data to detect weaknesses in curriculum and instruction. "People don't argue with their own data," said one principal. Teachers, parents, and other community members are also involved in

developing school plans with goals that are based on student performance data. Thus site-based decision-making, as well as district-level activity, have come to depend on frequent evaluation of school practices through the use of surveys to education stakeholders.

OVERALL SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

MISD created a solid framework for lasting improvements in its early childhood education program through Academics 2000 and other reform efforts. The district has been particularly successful in developing and implementing an elementary curricula that is aligned with TEKS, the Texas standards. Teachers used a software package called Results-Based Educational Model or R-BEM to develop the district curriculum. The software will later be used by all teachers as a planning tool. The teachers reported that creating interdisciplinary units and "performance expectations" that are part of the curriculum helped them better understand and teach the state standards. And because of the district-sponsored grade-level meetings and the multi-grade professional development sessions, teachers indicated that they are more aware of which topics should be covered at what grade-level.

Through its proactive approach to assessment, the district is focused on improving the academic achievement of all students. The district uses student performance data to drive district and school-level planning. The greatest challenge to the district's use of assessment data is the discomfort it causes some staff members. According to district administrators, some teachers are not yet accustomed to the public use of test data, nor analyzing the data and making necessary adjustments. Another challenge cited by district administrators is fear of "over testing." As a result of this fear, the district plans to exercise caution in creating and administering local tests.

The district's professional development activities have been successful in developing teacher leadership and helping teachers teach the new standards. In many of its elementary schools, the teachers are taking more responsibility for planning across and between grades. Academics 2000 teachers and the language arts coordinator agreed that extensive staff development in reading helped lay the foundation for implementing the new standards. The scarcity of time and funding present the greatest challenges to maintaining the high level of professional development in MISD. According to the early childhood education program manager, by providing stipends and the funds for consultants, training, and follow-up, the Academics 2000 grants enable new strategies and approaches to come into the district earlier, and more quickly, than would have been possible otherwise.

Academics 2000 teachers believe the technology emphasis of the reform effort has already achieved much success. Many who say they were technologically illiterate before the grants are now comfortable with technology. One teacher's students converse on e-mail with mentors on subjects such as Japanese culture and space science. Other teachers guide their students in the use of multimedia products such as the Quick-Take camera to create a summer school newspaper, and to conduct research. Although many teachers still need to increase their comfort with technology, professional development in technology has been well received by the elementary school teachers. All of the technology offerings have waiting lists, and teachers' excitement about

the prospects for instruction is high. The challenge is to translate that excitement into greater use of technology by more teachers.

As mentioned, the bilingual and ESL programs have become a strength of the district. Academics 2000 contributed to this through staff development. The inclusion of LEP students' needs in curriculum development and reading instruction have also helped school staff meet all of their students' needs. These changes, and special extended-day and extended-year programs, have contributed to greater student achievement among LEP students, according to principals.

Challenges to school-level reform include the lack of time for staff development and resources to pay for materials and for paraprofessionals. Other challenges identified by principals include the difficult home environment of some students, and the lack of parental involvement at certain schools. Overall, however, district administrators believe that schools in the district are moving in the right direction.

GOALS 2000 SUBGRANTS

Grant name	Grant amount	Year	Emphasis
Academics 2000 awards	$750,000	1995-2000	Academics 2000 funds were used for long-range curricular planning and professional development at the Academics 2000 schools and to provide multimedia equipment (a scanner, Quick-Take camera, VCR, and television) for each school and classroom libraries for prekindergarten through grade-2 classrooms.
Academics 2000 awards	$750,000	1996-2001	
Academics 2000 awards	$750,000	1998-2003	

North Carolina Math-Science Consortium/Algebra Readiness Through Environmental Studies (ARTES) Program

The Algebra Readiness Through Environmental Studies (ARTES) project is a consortium of four rural districts and a local university located in northeastern North Carolina that focuses on improving middle-school students' mathematics skills, an area of weakness identified in state assessment results. The participating districts – Currituck, Elizabeth City-Pasquotank, Gates, and Tyrell – have a combined student population of approximately 11,200. Sixty-three percent of the students in the four counties are white, 36 percent are African American, and one percent are Native American. The percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunches ranges from 15 percent in Currituck County to 31 percent in Tyrell. Overall, the student populations in the ARTES Consortium districts include higher percentages of minority and low-income students than the average North Carolina district. The collaborating university, Elizabeth City State University (ECSU), is the only institution of higher education in the region.

ARTES uses two curricular programs, Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) and Teach-Stat, to engage middle-school students in real-time data collection and analysis. The GLOBE curriculum is based on student collection of measurements of various hydrological and atmospheric features at local sites and student reporting of that data via the Internet to the GLOBE data processing facility in Colorado. There, the data is combined with input from other schools around the world. The GLOBE program is partly funded by the National Science Foundation, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Teach-Stat, a program developed at ECSU (through a statewide collaboration headed by the Science and Math Alliance and supported by the University of North Carolina campuses and the National Science Foundation), engages students in descriptive statistical analysis of the environment, as well as everyday events and occurrences. Both programs provide teachers with lessons plans, workbooks, and intensive professional development and followup. GLOBE requires computers, Internet access, and the purchase of measuring equipment. Similarly, many of the projects in Teach-Stat require computers and graphing calculators.

History and Governance of the ARTES Consortium

The ARTES Consortium grew out of an earlier consortium of nine superintendents from rural North Carolina who came together in 1994 to discuss collaborative approaches to improving student achievement. The superintendents were aware of impending state standards and were uncertain that they could meet them alone. As a result, working with the leadership of the state regional coordinator, they formed the Regional Education Service Alliance. The goals of the Alliance were to improve education and share resources among the districts. The Alliance also sought to develop a technology infrastructure in the region. Though time and other funding obligations limited the work of the Alliance, some of the districts participated in pilot projects

and applied for and received grants together. Consequently the districts in the ARTES Consortium had a history of collaborative effort. In fact, the notion of teaching mathematics through science grew out of two districts' piloting of the Teach-Stat program.

The superintendents of the districts in the Consortium continue develop their capacity to support and sustain systemic change at the school level. They are trying to "re-intellectualize" schooling, to give adults in their systems the professional experience and knowledge base to move from teaching memorization to teaching the application of knowledge. ARTES was conceptualized to help middle-school mathematics teachers emphasize hands-on, real world applications that motivate and engage students as critical thinkers.

The Consortium is governed by teacher leadership teams and coordinated by a program director. The leadership teams consist of three experienced teachers (one mathematics, one science, and one English or social studies) and one administrator from each school district. The teams are responsible for planning, coordinating, supporting, and evaluating the ARTES program. The initial program director, from Elizabeth City State University (ECSU), coordinated the participation of the various districts in the Consortium and wrote the Goals 2000 grant application. An educational consultant, who is the former state regional director of education for the area, has assumed this role after the initial director's death in 1997.

Goals 2000 subgrants provided funds for training and the purchase of equipment necessary to implement these programs. The Goals 2000 subgrant, according to the current ARTES director, galvanized the Consortium, allowing it to move from plans to implementation. Without Goals 2000 funds, said the director, "we wouldn't have gotten off first base."

Districts in the ARTES Consortium share resources, collaborate in professional development activities, and facilitate teacher interaction across districts. The collaboration between districts and the local university is part of a statewide push for increased collaboration between districts and state institutions of higher education. A professor at the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill and ECSU provided professional development to participating teachers in the Consortium. ECSU does not offer graduate programs, but provides professional development to teachers in the area.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Although data have not been aggregated for all ARTES students, trend data from each district suggest that the project has had a positive impact on the state assessment scores in mathematics of students in the middle schools that implemented the ARTES program. In Elizabeth City-Pasquotank, local and state assessments reveal an upward trend in middle-school mathematics scores. In Gates, one of the five participating schools met or exceeded the state growth standards in mathematics. In select schools in Tyrell and Currituck counties, the data reveal upward trends. In one of the two participating schools in Currituck, for example, the number of students scoring at or above grade level in Algebra I increased from 50 percent in 1995-96 to 85 percent in 1997-

98, and mathematics scores of the ARTES students increased by 3.4 points, while the overall school growth was only 0.3 points.

STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM

Each of the Consortium districts adopted the state standards in mathematics and aligned their curriculum with the state curriculum guides. Superintendents indicated that the standards, along with the new accountability measures, focused attention on mathematics and reading. The increased focus led the districts to find collaborative ways to increase academic improvement in both of those areas and provided the impetus for the ARTES program to address mathematics. Both GLOBE and Teach-Stat are well connected to the content and skills covered included in state and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) mathematics standards, according to the ARTES director.

The professor from ECSU who participated in the development of the Teach-Stat program delivered much of the professional development to teachers to support implementation of the curriculum. He also aligned the Teach-Stat curriculum with the state mathematics standards. This alignment ensures that appropriate materials are covered in the appropriate middle-school grades, and that students are exposed to mathematics concepts in preparation for successfully completing Algebra I, a state requirement. Subsequently, a group of science teachers formed a local science council to begin mapping GLOBE with the state science standards and develop an inter-district science curriculum.

According to district administrators in charge of instruction, 75 percent of the state content standards in mathematics can be taught using the skills that are emphasized in the Teach-Stat and GLOBE programs – skills such as measuring, drawing conclusions from information, and integrating subjects across the curriculum. Teachers concur, saying that Teach-Stat and GLOBE address most of the skills outlined in the standards.

The ARTES curricula involve numerous projects. For example, using Teach-Stat, middle-school students completed a questionnaire that included items such as name, date of birth, and favorite subject, compiled the data, and used descriptive statistics to report them. Another project involved the completion of an environmental impact study of the area surrounding the school, particularly the effects of "clear cutting" trees, writing letters to the National Arbor Day Foundation explaining concerns, and using the Internet to identify different environmental agencies that address common concerns. The students used TI-82 calculators to graph the results of the President's Physical Fitness test; they created digital pictures and line plots; they worked with probability on problems related to daily routines; and they analyzed statistics related to weather patterns. They also completed studies at a local bird sanctuary and tested the water in several lakes and ponds. They reported this data to the GLOBE data processing center as part of an international effort to study the planet.

Teachers contend that the inquiry-based learning (in which students formulate and test original hypotheses) used to implement the Teach-Stat and GLOBE curricula helps them successfully

teach all students, particularly low-performing students and students with nontraditional learning styles. The teachers found that students understood mathematics concepts better when they were able to touch and manipulate materials, and that they were motivated to explore the real-life and interesting topics highlighted in the activities. Teachers also indicated that the curricula help them move away from the text and integrate learning across the curriculum, and that parents have been impressed by the scope and depth of the ARTES project.

School and district administrators agree with teachers, indicating that both curricula provide numerous opportunities for participation and therefore enable students at all skill levels to participate in the learning process. The administrators said that the interdisciplinary approach has increased teacher collaboration and encouraged teachers to teach "themes" involving several disciplines. Administrators are particularly pleased that mathematics teachers are participating in science projects and that science projects involve writing letters to students abroad. Overall, the administrators believe that the project has changed teacher orientation to teaching mathematics and that this is reflected in their lesson planning and assessment activities.

Teachers and district administrators indicated that the challenges involved in implementing the curricula relate to time. Learning to teach the curricula is time-consuming, and when professional development is offered during the school day, teachers have to be absent from their classes, which is disruptive and can adversely affect student learning. In addition, teachers said that they need more focused learning time to complete the projects in the Teach-Stat and GLOBE curricula. Data collection projects often require extended learning time. Administrators acknowledged this challenge and are proposing block scheduling to address it. Finally, the project was slow to get started in some of the districts, in part because of building construction and in part because schools were slow to gain Internet access.

Assessment

The Teach-Stat and GLOBE curricula involve students in carrying out projects. Thus, teachers involved in the program often assess student work using scoring guides that detail different levels of proficiency. Because many of the districts in the Consortium are moving toward assessments involving real-life activities, the classroom assessment of the ARTES program is well coordinated with district assessment policies. Students amass portfolios of their work over the course of the grading period, and teachers review the portfolios periodically. According to teachers, using scoring guides and portfolios help to make their expectations known and to involve the students in the grading process. Individual teachers assess as they teach and often give end-of-semester and end-of-year tests.

However, to evaluate student achievement in aggregate, the ARTES project relies primarily on standardized state tests. Teachers indicated that the students are more comfortable with word problems, open-ended questions, and other types of questions requiring problem-solving skills found on the state test, in part because they have worked with these types of problems throughout the school year.

As indicated earlier, student scores on the state assessment are increasing. Many educators in the district expressed concern, however, that too much emphasis is placed on the tests, especially since the tests are predominantly multiple choice and not well aligned with the standards. Administrators indicated that the drive to increase test scores pressures teachers to limit the scope of their teaching to items on the test, and acts as a deterrent to teachers' willingness to work with thematic, project-based units. Teachers said that the state test is not closely aligned with the standards and depends upon outdated assessment techniques.

All interviewees acknowledged that teachers are still being trained in the development and use of performance-based assessments. They continue to refine criteria for "high-quality" work, with teams of teachers developing performance tasks and scoring guides, which will eventually be shared with other teachers in the program.

Professional Development

Largely funded by the Goals 2000 subgrant, teachers have participated in numerous professional development activities offered through the Teach-Stat and GLOBE programs.

Teach-Stat training involved a two-week inservice during the summer in which teachers are trained in sampling techniques, sample analysis, use of sampling instruments, and data analysis using computers and graphing calculators. In addition, teachers received three half-day followup sessions and coaching visits from a university professor. Approximately 100 teachers over the two-year course of the program received this training. In addition, 20 teachers were trained in the use of basic Internet software in an intensive 3.5-day residential workshop at ECSU. These teachers now act as resources and trainers in their schools. Their training was supplemented by four ½-day workshops and additional training over the Internet. Several teachers took advantage of the opportunity to attend a course at ECSU on using the software package Geographic Information Systems, which provides a pictorial and graphic representation of data in a defined geographical context. In addition, many teachers attended intensive workshops in how to use graphing calculators, and others attended informal workshops to collaborate with their peers.

Teachers also received training in how to implement the GLOBE curriculum. This training lasted for one or two weeks, with some sessions during the summer, and involved instruction on the measurement procedures and the GLOBE computer technology system. The teachers attended numerous national and state followup training sessions, and advanced training was also made available.

It is difficult to gauge the exact amount of professional development all teachers in the region received because teachers often participated in informal voluntary sessions, many of which were undocumented. Overall, the ARTES program has provided quality sustained professional development in content and instruction to over 270 teachers in the region. Furthermore, teacher leadership team members were provided with monthly leadership development training. According to administrators, the teachers needed support to effectively carry out their roles as

leaders in the Consortium. They received training in change and decision-making processes and on teamwork and effective strategies for conducting meetings.

Teachers we interviewed described the ARTES professional development activities as demanding, reaffirming, and highly beneficial. The GLOBE program was considered quite challenging, and some of the teachers indicated that they were initially intimidated by the scope and detail involved in implementing the curriculum. However, these teachers found the training particularly well organized and delivered by scientists who respected them and provided hands-on experiences that made learning the curriculum easier and more interesting. The teachers indicated that the training forced them to take control of the work, pushed them to higher levels of thinking, and reemphasized that there are many ways to solve a problem.

The teachers appreciated the opportunities to work with other teachers outside of their disciplines, outside of their schools, and outside of their districts. And because the GLOBE training was often offered at the state or national level, participating teachers had the opportunity to meet and work with an even broader range of teachers. Teachers indicated that the professional interaction made possible through the Consortium is invaluable, and as a result they find that they are collaborating much more.

The teachers also reported that they could immediately use the materials received in training in their classrooms. In addition, especially in the Teach-Stat training, they learned how to use everyday classroom items in interesting and fun lessons. As a result of the Goals 2000 subgrant, teachers were compensated for the first time for their work over the summer. Teachers also participated in summer field trips/excursions to local environmental sites and were paid to write integrated mathematics and science activities. These have been compiled in a manual that is being distributed and presented across North Carolina.

Interestingly, teachers and administrators felt that the training is so well received because the teachers had training in multiple intelligences and other "brain research" prior to receiving the professional development associated with ARTES. The ARTES director believed that this prior training cultivated a belief that all students can learn and it is the school system's job to find and employ the methods that maximize student potential. GLOBE and Teach-Stat offered teachers new ways of thinking about measurement, new skills, and new methods, which they readily accepted and put into practice, according to the ARTES director.

Evaluation

The ARTES program underwent formative and summative evaluations. The formative evaluation, which was informal, was conducted through observation and teacher self-reporting. The director of the program, district administrators, and a university professor who is involved with the program conducted classroom observations. In all formal professional development sessions, teachers completed evaluation forms. The program made adjustments and changes based on these informal measures.

The summative evaluation of the program was conducted as a requirement of the state department of education for all Goals 2000 subgrantees. This impact study required the director of the program to answer a set of questions with input from program participants. The questions related to the goals of the program and how those goals were met. The evaluation form requested information about the types of evidence available to verify assertions made in answering the evaluation questions, including test scores. Although the state department of education did not fund the project for a third year, the flexible nature of the subgrant supported local creativity, teacher leadership, and, ultimately, student achievement, according to district and school staff involved. District administrators felt that more information was required to give the state a better picture of program accomplishments.

Overall Successes and Challenges

District- and school-level participants assert that the ARTES program has succeeded in a number of respects.

- As a result of the Goals 2000 subgrant, the Consortium has received several other grants to continue the project, including a $500,000 professional development grant from the Annenberg Foundation. Individual districts in the Consortium have received smaller grants from state and federal sources. Most significant, however, is the $1.4 million Local Systemic Change grant from the National Science Foundation that members of the Consortium received, along with three other local districts. Combined with other grants, the Consortium has leveraged $2.4 million from the program originally supported by Goals 2000 funds.

- The ARTES Consortium demonstrates that small rural districts can work together to gain resources and implement programs that are mutually beneficial. Through sharing technological resources, curriculum, and professional development opportunities, the districts seem to have increased the capacity of the their teachers and other staff to better help students meet high standards. These improvements appear to be institutionalized.

- The "real-time" hands-on approach to learning exemplified in the GLOBE and Teach-Stat programs, combined with the integration of science and mathematics, have increased student motivation according to participants. As a result, several of the districts have expanded the program to include elementary and high school components.

- Achievement scores are increasing, and students are becoming better prepared to take and pass Algebra I, according to teachers and principals interviewed.

- The Consortium has integrated technology into teaching and learning, and has developed a technological infrastructure which allows for increased communication and sharing locally, nationally, and internationally.

- According to district superintendents, the GLOBE and Teach-curricula and professional development have caused many teachers to use project-oriented instruction, involve low-achieving students in classroom activities, engage in more collegial work, and teach thematically and across disciplines.

- Through training in leadership development and through their roles in focusing and guiding the ARTES program, teachers say they have assumed new roles, and are more comfortable in leadership positions.

The Consortium faces several challenges. According to the ARTES director, time is a major challenge to the training of staff and to the implementation of the curricula. Superintendents acknowledge this challenge and are discussing scheduling changes to address the need for additional time to complete project-based work.

Teacher turnover is also a problem in the region. The director reported that it is particularly vexing when the Consortium invests time and money in training a teacher who then leaves the Consortium. Teachers expressed concern about maintaining adequate resources for the implementation of the GLOBE and Teach-Stat curricula.

School staff indicated that helping low-achieving students improve their academic performance also poses a challenge to the program. Some teachers felt that these children were falling through the cracks, though most believed that the current reforms were doing more for those children than before. Teachers and administrators stressed the need to continue searching for ways to reach students who are not performing well.

Finally, administrators and teachers expressed concern that the current level of assessment in the districts is inadequate. Teachers we interviewed felt that they need more training in how to assess project-based work. Uniformly, personnel in the district felt that too much emphasis is placed on the state exam and that its format is not in line with the latest research on assessment.

GOALS 2000 SUBGRANTS

Grant name	Grant amount	Year	Emphasis
Goals 2000 School Improvement Subgrant	$80,000	1995-1996	Used to improve middle-school mathematics instruction through a focus on student data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting. Also supported professional development, leadership training, and the integration of technology in instruction.
Continuation Subgrant	$150,000	1996-1997	
Continuation Subgrant	$150,000	1997-1998	

WICHITA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WICHITA PUBLIC SCHOOLS, the largest school district in Kansas, serves 48,454 students in 106 school sites. Fifty-six percent of the students are white, 23 percent are African-American, and 13 percent are Hispanic. Fifty-two percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. Located in south central Kansas, the district covers 152 square miles. Forty-five percent of the district's student population lives in rural areas.

Wichita's reform started in 1993 with the work of the district's strategic planning team. Thirty representatives from many sectors of the community – including school and central office staff, the board of education, non-certified staff, business and community organizations, and parents – met during a three-day retreat in July. After analyzing the results of a survey of local businesses and other community members, the committee developed a mission statement, strategic objectives, and parameters to guide a five-year improvement plan. The plan, which was aligned with the National Education Goals, the state's Quality Performance Accreditation standards, and North Central Accreditation process, included seventeen strategies. These strategies formed the core of the strategic improvement plan.

Wichita's overall goals for reform are captured in the four strategic objectives, which emerged out of the strategic planning process:

- The high school graduation rate will be continually increased until it reaches 100 percent of the students.
- The achievement gap among the student populations with respect to socioeconomics, ethnicity, and gender will be continually reduced as measured by multiple assessments.
- The achievement level of all students will be continually increased as measured by multiple assessments.
- The percentage of graduates rated as prepared and competent for post-high school will continually increase as measured by the survey of students, parents, and business representatives.

While engaged in large-scale reform, Wichita has undergone substantial state budget cuts. Although the local economy has flourished, and business and industry have raised employee salaries, classroom teachers were not given a raise between 1993 and 1997. To keep pace with the budget cuts – and to keep teachers on staff – Wichita central office reduced its size by 40 percent, cutting the number of assistant superintendents from nine to two. Additionally, hundreds of other nonteaching positions have been cut throughout the district.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Wichita students have demonstrated increased academic achievement, particularly in reading, writing, and mathematics - three areas targeted for improvement in the district. In reading,

student scores on the Metropolitan Achievement Test, 7th Edition (MAT 7) (reported as average national percentile ranks), have increased in grades 3, 4, 5, 7, and 9 from the 1995 to 1997. During the same period, mathematics scores on the MAT 7 have increased at grade levels 3 through 9 over the same time period, with upward trends for each grade over the three-year period. On state mathematics assessments, student scores (reported as the percent of questions answered correctly) have increased in grade 4 and grade 7. Grade-4 averages are a continuation of a three-year positive trend, and grade 7 scores are the highest of the three-year reporting time frame. In 1997-98, grade-5 and grade-10 writing scores on the state Six Trait Writing Assessments (reported as average ratings on 1-5 scale) increased. Grade-5 increases are continuation of a three-year positive trend from 1995-96, while the 1997-98 grade-10 scores are a return to the previous high levels of 1995-96.

In addition, scores on the ACT and SAT are climbing steadily, with increases in the number of students taking the tests. Scores on the ACT WorkKeys test of work-related skills have been increasing since the test was first given in 1996. According to district administrators, some test data suggest that achievement gaps between males and females, and between minority and nonminority students, have narrowed.

STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM

Wichita began to develop its standards and curriculum in May 1993, in response to a voluntary curriculum audit by the American Association of School Administrators. The district began by creating local standards which, with minor adjustments, are based on the state standards and aligned with national standards. After reviewing the current curriculum and identifying the skills desired of high school graduates, district curriculum coordinators and a core group of teachers worked backwards to develop very specific benchmarks for each course at every grade level. All teachers in the district were given the opportunity to provide feedback on these benchmarks through surveys. Community members, students, and other education stakeholders also provided input.

With Goals 2000 funding, the district hired an outside expert from Kansas State University to train the curriculum coordinators to instruct teachers in how to create curriculum standards and benchmarks and to align them with assessments. Substitutes, release time, and stipends were provided for the lead teachers to work on the curriculum standards.

In June 1996, the district produced its "Curriculum Course and Grade Level Standards," which describes the standards, curriculum objectives, and aligned instructional materials for each course and grade level. Aligned with the district's strategic improvement plan, it is a blueprint for a district curriculum. The course and grade-level standards were distributed to teachers, along with periodic revisions. Course and grade-level standards were put on the district's web site recently.

The assistant superintendent acknowledges that some teachers may not have looked at the curriculum yet, but through the district's efforts in assessment, most teachers are teaching to the

standards – particularly in reading, writing, and mathematics, where the district has focused its assessment work. Principals agreed with this claim.

Assessment

Based on recommendations from the team that reviewed its curriculum, the district developed a plan for comprehensive assessment in 1995. Over 200 teachers, parents, community members, and business representatives participated in the creation of this plan. The plan specifies how student progress will be measured, including what types of assessments should be used at each grade level, as well as a time line for establishing a high-stakes accountability system.

The plan requires students to take several assessments. The district requires that grade 3-9 students take the Metropolitan Achievement Test, 7th Edition, in reading, mathematics, and writing, and that its grade 9 and grade 11 students take the WorkKeys test, which assesses students' work-related skills in eight areas, such as listening, applied technology, and applied mathematics. WorkKeys is supported by the Wichita Chamber of Commerce and Wichita Technical College. In addition, starting in the 1998-1999 academic year, all students in grades 2, 5, 8, and 11 will take locally developed benchmark assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics. At the time of this writing, passing scores were about to be set at each grade level based on scores in a field test.

According to district administrators, the development of local performance assessments, more than the curriculum standards, is what drives instructional change in the district. Some implied that assessment is more important than curriculum: "We used to come up with teaching strategies first. Now, we come up with assessments first," said one administrator.

The district chose to develop local assessments for several reasons. First, it wanted to provide better longitudinal data on student and teacher performance than was available. Second, the district felt it could better prepare students and teachers for the state assessments through benchmark assessments in the years between the state assessments. Third, the district was advised by an outside consultant not to rely on state assessments to adequately measure the success of the local curriculum.

Goals 2000 grants have played a major role in supporting the creation, use, and scoring of local reading, writing, and mathematics assessments starting in 1995-1996. One hundred teachers worked with curriculum coordinators and a consultant to develop the benchmark assessments and scoring guides. Participants were trained in how to develop valid, reliable test items using state performance test items as a model. The district also began training its staff to use performance and traditional assessment measures more effectively. Goals 2000 also supported training on interpreting and reporting student performance data and using test results and – for high school teams – guidance in using the WorkKeys test targets in instruction.

The district's Quality Improvement Services (QIS) department has improved the use of student performance data throughout the district. The department is responsible for procuring state

testing materials, creating test schedules, scanning and scoring the tests, and analyzing and disseminating the results. All Kansas school districts are required to provide detailed information regarding state-mandated tests. However, Wichita's QIS department disaggregates Quality Performance Accreditation data using additional breakouts that are helpful to schools, such as the analysis of data by classroom and by test items. It also disseminates the data at multiple intervals and in multiple formats, enhancing its usefulness. Wichita "is way ahead of other districts" in tailoring data presentation to school needs, says a QIS official, especially for a district so large.

Professional Development

One of the seventeen reform strategies to emerge from the district's strategic planning process was the use of "results-driven staff development." According to the assistant superintendent, staff development has served five goals in Wichita: (1) to align the new local standards with the local assessments, (2) to develop the instructional staff's use of multiple strategies and assessments, (3) to develop leadership and a continuous improvement focus throughout the district. (4) to support campus improvement planning, and (5) to support the growth of a professional development school. To support these goals, professional development in the district took three forms: developing assessments (which is discussed in the "Assessment" section of this report), Leadership Development Training, and a professional development school.

Developing assessments. Between 1993 and 1996, training in curriculum and assessment alignment developed teachers' and administrators' capacity to support standards-based reform. As mentioned, many teachers gave input on the curriculum standards, and in 1994 the entire instructional staff was exposed to a draft of the standards at an in-service. Furthermore, Goals 2000 provided funds for the training of cadres of lead teachers in multiple assessment strategies starting in 1995-1996. Teachers trained in assessment went on to share this training with colleagues at their schools.

Leadership development training. Wichita's focus on reform has been aided by a districtwide training process in leadership development, called the Leadership Development Process (LDP). Brought to the district from the Texas Leadership Center by the superintendent and assistant superintendent, the training enhances educators' leadership and problem-solving skills and increases personal and teamwork effectiveness. LDP also includes a continuous quality improvement component to support school improvement plans and help educators develop sensitivity to internal and external customers.

LDP training began in Wichita in August 1993, with support from local businesses. Through the 1994-1995 Goals 2000 local reform grant, the five-day training was provided to staff from 36 schools with the highest concentration of low-achieving, low-income students. Although the district started out training only teachers, a doctoral study undertaken by a district administrator in 1996-1997 illustrated the need for training principals, central office staff, and site council leaders as well to facilitate leadership at the sites. This study encouraged the district to begin training all district and building staffs, including custodians and clerical staff. In total, between 2500 and 3000 district personnel have been trained in LDP.

District leaders say that LDP training has moved the district away from hierarchical decision-making. One administrator called the process "life changing" on an individual level. District administrators say LDP has helped school and district staff take responsibility for reforming the district. LDP "gave us a new vocabulary" throughout the district that is aligned with business and industry change models, according to one administrator.

Since 1994, all staff have been supported in their professional growth with a Staff Quality Improvement System (SQUIS) that is based on the continuous improvement principles identified in the LDP training. Through SQUIS, teachers work with their principals to develop goals for professional growth, which are not evaluated formally. SQUIS goals must be tied to the school improvement plan.

Professional development school. A four-year Goals 2000 continuation grant has supported the growth of the Horace Mann/Irving/Park professional development complex, which opened in August 1995. The complex consists of three elementary schools which are concentrated in a small area in downtown Wichita. It serves pre-K through grade 5 students in the poorest, most racially isolated neighborhood in the district. Before becoming a professional development school, most of the students had low test scores in all subjects but writing.

Annually, the professional development school trains from 20 to 40 Wichita State University elementary education majors, many of whom are nonminorities, to work with inner-city youth. Preservice teachers spend two years full-time at the school site. They take core and elective courses taught by university professors and district instructors. In addition, each preservice student must spend twelve hours beyond the required observation time tutoring and mentoring. The in-service students are supervised by assigned classroom teachers.

The school is unique in a number of respects. Instructional staff are organized into grade-level teams that include teachers, paraprofessionals (many of whom are Hispanic), and English-as-a-second-language parents. These teams meet twice a week in planning sessions. The presence of pre-service students and paraprofessionals has led to high adult-to-student ratios in the classroom. The school has also developed a strong dual-language program, with English-speaking students receiving instruction in Spanish. Technology has been highly utilized, with six computers in every classroom, and new looping and tutoring programs are in place. Through active recruitment and "Grow Your Own Teacher" programs for minority personnel and college students, a dedicated staff has been developed. Goals 2000 funds provided graduate credit for preservice students, instructional materials, supplies, and stipends for special teachers who took on added responsibilities such as mentoring and teacher-directed research at the professional development schools.

According to the principal, these efforts, along with the district's new curriculum standards, have made the professional development school a success. In 1997, grade 3 reading scores on the state assessments were at their highest level since 1994, and state mathematics scores were at their highest level since 1994 in two of the four instructional strands tested. The district and the school have benefited from the interaction with university faculty (one a full-time staff member at the school). And all of the university students who have been through program have succeeded in

gaining employment in education, several in Wichita public schools. Although the school struggles to raise parental involvement and retain good teachers, it represents a successful pre-service training initiative that will be expanded to include more in-service professional development, according to district administrators. In the future, the district plans to facilitate visits to the school by other teachers from across the district.

TECHNOLOGY

The district has launched a substantial plan to enhance its technology infrastructure. These efforts are supervised by the district's technology steering committee, organized in 1996. The committee consists of approximately 30 business and community leaders, central office staff, administrators, teachers, and others, including two high school students recently added. After conducting a needs assessment, the original committee determined that poor communication and fragmentation were compromising the district's technology efforts. To address these problems, the committee developed a technology framework and overall policy that is aligned with the district's mission. The policy includes guiding principles to direct planning and implementation of technology efforts and an organizational structure to better link various technology personnel. The steering committee meets monthly to specify district priorities for technology and to evaluate progress.

With a Goals 2000 technology subgrant and a $17 million technology bond, the committee helped develop a technology plan for the district. The goals of the plan include development of the following: (1) WAN (wide area network) and LANs (local area networks) for improved voice, data and video connections between all sites; (2) a new financial system for the district; (3) an improved system for personnel management; and (4) a student database system. The database will be piloted in seven sites during the 1998-1999 academic year, according to district administrators. It will permit teachers to access individual student test data from their classroom computers. In time, the database will be linked to the curriculum standards so teachers can use it to devise individual student education plans. The plan also calls for new software for the district's food service, transportation, and library systems.

Technology is also a targeted instructional area. Computer applications standards are delineated in the district's course and grade-level standards for pre-Kindergarten through grade-12 students. Schools determine which textbooks, software, and hardware to use as resources to help students meet the standards. In addition, computer studies standards are delineated by the district for high school courses in business law, accounting, business technology, and other areas. The district is also involved in an effort to put the local standards on its web site.

REFORM AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL

Progress in the reforms of Wichita schools is most evident in the use of data-driven decision-making, the allocation of funding, and campus planning and improvement. Principals are becoming more accustomed to basing their decisions on data analysis. If the state said, "you're

not accountable anymore," said one elementary principal, she would still collect extensive student performance data. As mentioned, the Quality Improvement Services department assists schools in using such data effectively.

Using a "Plan-Do-Study-Act" model for continuous improvement and a self-assessment scoring guide, site staff develop campus improvement plans that are aligned with state accreditation requirements. As mentioned, site council members receive training in leadership development and continuous improvement, including the same "Plan-Do-Study-Act" model and self-assessment scoring guide used by site staff. Before the campus improvement plans are submitted to the state, school site council members review them.

Site councils also offer family members a forum for learning about school reform. For example, the district has brought in outside experts to discuss issues such as assessment with parents in site council sessions. And every fall, site councils across the district hold a conference where they share their improvement plans and annual accomplishments.

Since 1997, five district-level site-improvement teams have supported schools in their efforts to increase academic achievement through site improvement planning. Each team includes a central office representative and others with expertise in technology, data analysis, administration, and other areas. In initial meetings, the team reviews the site improvement plan with the principal and develops an aligned technology plan. In subsequent visits, the teams focus on financial processes, data analysis, and identifying staff development needs. These are not monitoring visits; sometimes, according to one team leader, principals simply needed someone to listen. Initially, principals were skeptical of the site improvement teams, but now they are more likely to respect the team members as knowledgeable facilitators and supporters.

Other districtwide support teams assist schools in other areas such as the coordination of volunteers and tutors, the provision of translators, and the support of school/business partnerships.

In addition, the district established the Parent Teacher Resources (PTR) department in 1995. The goal of the PTR department is to enhance student growth through support and assistance of individual teachers and school staff, parents, and volunteers. The PTR department offers training in community and family involvement to site council members, including teachers, administrators, and parents. The training is given at school sites approximately four times a year. In the training, participants review literature on family involvement, analyze current community/family involvement at the school, share promising practices, and develop and discuss a school-wide action plan for increasing community/family involvement in at least one key area. Schools are also encouraged to establish a parent/teacher resources library.

According to the director of the PTR department, communication between homes and schools has increased in the past few years. Parents are more aware of their role in supporting their children's education and are more likely to use educational materials designed for home use. But the most significant change has been in the kind of involvement: it has become more intense and

more meaningful, in great part because it is aimed at the same goal as the rest of the district: helping to increase student achievement.

The district uses an equity distribution formula to allocate resources to schools. This formula provides more resources to schools with higher percentages of low-income, high-risk students. District administrators made frequent reference to this practice, and principals said it has increased their confidence that funds are getting to the buildings that need them most. In addition, principals said district has made a strong effort to help schools secure outside funding through grant development workshops.

Overall Successes and Challenges

District administrators feel that Wichita has been most successful in aligning its standards and assessments. Teachers and principals indicated the new curriculum has increased teacher collaboration, especially across disciplines. District administrators indicate that the training in multiple assessment method – and particularly the scoring guides used in conjunction with the benchmark assessments – appear to be having a profound impact on teacher practice. Teachers say students, too, are learning how to follow scoring guides, which has led them to take more responsibility for their learning. The assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction says the superintendent's "curriculum-oriented leadership" has contributed to the district's success in this area.

The district's efforts to enhance site-based decision-making appear successful. According to district administrators, continuous improvement efforts have upgraded site improvement plans to include more specific and measurable goals. Teachers and principals collaborate on teachers' individual growth plans, and principals feel more confident making instructional decisions for their schools as a result of the district's support and training. In some schools, for example, teachers have been given longer planning periods to work in teams on curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

Principals agree that overall professional development in Wichita is no longer a "one-shot deal." Teachers report receiving more continuous, in-depth coverage of topics since the reforms began in 1993. Through professional development, teachers say they now have a common language. Most important, professional development and curriculum are "married" now, according to principals. Other accomplishments cited by interviewees include high levels of community involvement in the reform effort and, at the Horace Mann Professional Development School, increased test scores.

Interviewees cited several challenges related to the district's ambitious assessment system. The time and money required to implement the have taxed the district. The district has spent $1 million per year on assessment and will need to satisfy its customers' demands for results in the near future. Yet a related challenge is the scoring of the assessments, which is more time-consuming and costly than initially expected. Although the benchmark assessments were administered districtwide for the first time in February of this year, the results will not be

available until November. Third, district-level staff and teachers are anxious to resolve the question of how the district and local community will deal with students who do not meet requirements for promotion and graduation. Fourth, district administrators expressed concern about possible legal consequences of a local, high-stakes accountability system.

District administrators acknowledge that despite their current level of progress, teachers need more professional development on how collaborative work and teaching to the standards.

Other challenges involve governance, particularly because the superintendent and one of the assistant superintendents left Wichita in the spring of 1998. District stability has also been threatened somewhat by a struggle for control of the local union. Yet central office vacancies are being filled, and the commitment to reforms already begun remains strong. Most important, the focus continues to be on improving student achievement.

GOALS 2000 SUBGRANTS

Grant name	Grant amount	Year	Emphasis
Goals 2000 Local Education Reform Subgrant	$50,000	1994	Provided release time and substitute pay for school teams from 36 low-income, low-achieving schools to participate in leadership development training.
Goals 2000 Local Education Reform Subgrant	$94,424	1995	Supported leadership development training for teachers at 112 additional schools, improved alignment between district curriculum and assessment, and planning for a professional development school.
Goals 2000 Local Education Reform Subgrant	$136,878	1996	Contributed to leadership development training for additional teachers and principals, completion of the alignment between curriculum and assessment, completion of benchmark assessments, and assessment training for lead teachers.
Goals 2000 Open Competition Grant	$143,000	1996	Used to provide assessment training to 200 teachers and support staff and to develop new graduation requirements and an alternative degree program.
Goals 2000 Local Education Reform Subgrant	$139,173	1997	Supported advanced leadership training for administrators and staff, support for technology and site council planning at the schools, professional development in instruction, and professional development school planning.
Goals 2000 Mini-grants	$10,000 ($2,000/ school)	1997	Supported school reform initiatives at three middle schools and two elementary schools.
Goals 2000 Preservice/Professional Development Subgrant	$100,000	1994-1998	Supported the planning and implementation of an elementary level professional development school in a low-income neighborhood.
Goals 2000 Technology Subgrant	$337,407	1998	Provided on-site staff development and staff support in technology at all campuses, as well as a district computer lab for staff.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AP	Advanced Placement
AQS	Alliance of Quality Schools
ARTES	Algebra Readiness Through Environmental Studies
CAM	Certificate of Advance Mastery
CHIPPY	Center and Home-based Instruction for Parents and Youths
CIM	Certificate of Initial Mastery
DWAC	Doña Ana Workforce Action Council
ECSU	Elizabeth City State University
EPSS	Educational Plan for Student Success
ESL	English-as-a-Second-Language
ESPA	Elementary School Proficiency Assessment
FCAT	Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test
FEPC	Future Education Planning Compact
FIU	Florida International University
GLOBE	Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment
GPA	Grade Point Average
HIPPY	Home Instructional Program for Preschool Youngsters
HRD	Human Resources Department
IASA	Improving America's Schools Act
ITBS	Iowa Test of Basic Skills
LAN	Local Area Network
LDP	Leadership Development Process
LEP	Limited-English Proficiency
MAT 7	Metropolitan Achievement Test, 7th Edition
MEA	Maine Educational Assessment
MISD	McAllen Independent School District
MSAD	Maine School Administrative District
MSPAP	Maryland School Performance Assessment Program
NAEP	National Assessment of Education Program
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NCE	Normal Curve Equivalent
NCTM	National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
NOAA	National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
NSF	National Science Foundation
PACE	Parent and Child Education
PDS	Professional Development School
PTO	Parent-Teacher Organization
PTR	Parent Teacher Resources
QIS	Quality Improvement Services

R-BEM	Results-Based Educational Model
SAC	School Advisory Council
SAT 8	Stanford Achievement Test, 8th Edition
SIT	School Improvement Team
SQUIS	Staff Quality Improvement System
STAR	Secondary Techniques Accelerate Reading
TAAS	Texas Assessment of Academic Skills
TEKS	Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills
TLCF	Technology Literacy Challenge Fund
TOSA	Teacher-On-Special-Assignment
WAN	Wide Area Network

APPENDIX

Protocols

Superintendent
Goals 2000 Coordinator
Curriculum Specialist
Assessment Specialist
Professional Development Specialist
Principal Focus Group
Teacher Focus Group

Goals 2000 Case Studies
Superintendent Protocol

Name_____
Title_____
Years in position_____
Prior Experience_____

NOTE: Questions will be added and/or modified based on the researchers' review of district documents and priorities related to standards-based reform.

1. What are the goals of the reform effort in _____ [insert the name of the district]? How were they determined?

2. Please provide a brief history of the district's reform effort. [Probe: When did the district first begin the process of standards-based reform? What do you consider to be the milestones in the district's reform effort (e.g., adoption of standards, new vision, etc.)?

If not supplied above, ask #3:

3. How has the reform effort been implemented in your district? [Probe: Starting with professional development, with new assessments? What is driving the reform effort? Stages of readiness, regions or geographic areas, clusters of schools, school or grade levels?

4. How are teachers and other individuals involved in planning the reform effort?

5. How much of your reform plan has been implemented at this time? For example, how many schools have adopted the curriculum, how many teachers have been introduced to the standards, etc.?

6. What is your time table for full implementation of the district's reform plan?

I. Goals 2000 subgrants

1. We understand that your district received a Goals 2000 ____ subgrant. What reforms does the subgrant support? [Probe: The adoption or creation of standards, curriculum/assessment alignment, professional development? How was the subgrant spent in the district?]

1a. How else have you used the Goals program?

2. What aspects of these reforms have been particularly effective in improving teaching and learning in your district? What evidence suggests that the reforms have been effective?

II. Standards-based reform

Standards

1. How were the state's standards translated into district policy?

2. What was the process used by your district to develop/create/adopt content standards? Performance standards?

3. How were the standards introduced to the schools in the district? What has been the response of the key stakeholders?

4. How are the standards linked to curriculum in your district? To assessment? To professional development? To what extent are curriculum/assessment/professional development aligned? Please explain.

5. What process did you use to align curriculum/assessment/professional development?

6. What challenges did (does) your district face in developing and implementing standards?

Curriculum

1. Has your district developed/adopted a curriculum for teachers to follow that is aligned with the district standards? Has the state? If so, in what subject areas? In what grades?

2. By what process was the curriculum developed/adopted? And by whom? [Probe: created by committee, selected by a review team, decision made by district administrators?]

3. How was the curriculum introduced to administrators? To teachers? To parents? [Probe: in stages - schools or clusters, by grade level, by subject]

4. How fully has the curriculum been implemented in the district?

5. How have administrators responded to the curriculum? Teachers? Students? Parents?

6. What are the greatest challenges in implementing the curriculum? How is the district responding to these challenges?

Professional Development

1. What is the focus of professional development activities in your district? [Probe: content areas, grade levels, etc.,] How was the decision made to focus in this (these) areas?

2. In what areas do your district staff and administration need the greatest support to carry out the reforms effectively? D you think the district is adequately addressing these needs?

3. How many days/hours of professional development do teachers in your district receive each school year? Is this adequate in your opinion? Please explain how the content and nature of pd may have changed.

4. Who offers professional development to the teachers in your district? [Probe: district personnel, contractors, etc.] How is this decision made?

5. How have the professional development activities offered by the district affected teaching and learning in schools? Please explain.

6. What challenges did (does) the district face in implementing professional development activities? How have these challenges been addressed?

Assessment

1. Do you have targeted goals for increasing student achievement? How were these goals established?

1a. What assessment measures do you use in your district?

2. What changes have you seen in student achievement levels on the _____ (state assessment)? On the district-wide assessment? Are the changes targeted or district-wide? To what do you attribute these changes?

3. How are assessments used in your district? By district administrators, by school level administrators, by teachers? [Probe for continuous improvement]

4. Are the assessments aligned with your district's standards?

5. Is your district held accountable for student achievement by the state? If so, how?

6. How are the schools in your district held accountable for student achievement?

7. What challenges has the district faced in the implementation and use of assessments in schools?
How has the district addressed these challenges?

Parental involvement

1. Has your district set goals to increase family involvement in schools? If yes, what are they? How are they being implemented?

If not supplied above, ask #2:

2. What activities, if any, does your district engage in to increase family involvement in schools?

3. How do parents know what is expected of their children?

4. What challenges does the district face in attempting to increase the level of parental involvement in the schools?

5. How have these challenges been addressed?

6. Has family involvement in schools increased as a result of these activities?

7. Have the types of family involvement encouraged by the schools changed in the last few years? If so, how?

III. Other aspects of reform

1. What policies/programs, if any, do you have in place to help special student populations achieve to district standards? [Probe: LEP students? special education students? at-risk students?]

2. Are there any other reform efforts linked to the district standards and/or local plans underway that we have not yet discussed? Any other district-wide reforms? If yes, please explain. (Probe: community partnerships with universities, local businesses, increased graduation requirements; longer school day/year; magnet schools, charter schools)

3. Has your district made progress in other areas of reform? (Probe: In graduation rates, course-taking, AP test-taking, etc.?)

4. Is your district undergoing any major changes? [Probe: state takeover, court orders, accreditation?] How has this affected the reform effort?

IV. Structure and governance of district

1. In your opinion, what are the major educational reforms at the state level?

2. Do your goals coincide with state priorities? Why or why not? [Probe: Is the state on the right track in your opinion? Why or why not?]

3. In what ways does the state monitor your reform efforts? [Probe: reports to state, using state frameworks, assessments]

4. Has the district's relationship with the state changed in the past few years? If so, how? Why? [Probe for response to changes in: funding formulas, waivers or deregulation, accountability reports, curricular initiatives]

5. In what ways do you ensure that school-level reforms are aligned with district-level reforms? How do you monitor the reform effort at the school level? How do you monitor progress at that level? [Probe: reports, assessments, evaluations?]

6. Has communication improved between district personnel?

7. What challenges do you think schools face in implementing reform?

8. Has the district's relationship with the schools changed in the past few years? If so, how? Why?
[Probe for response to changes in: funding formulas, waivers or deregulation, accountability reports, curricular initiatives]

V. Fiscal matters

1. What funding sources, in addition to Goals, are supporting reform in your district? [Probe: Title I, Eisenhower, private contributions].

2. Have there been changes in the ways that federal and state money can be spent? If so, what are the changes? [Probe: more or less categorical spending, blended funding, etc.,?] Have you found these change beneficial or prohibitive?

VI. Accomplishments and challenges

1. In what areas of reform has your district been most successful? What role, if any, has Goals 2000 played in these successes? Please explain.

2. What factors do you think have contributed most to your district's success? [Probe for factors in planning and early implementation]

3. What are the most important challenges to your district's reform effort? Has the Goals 2000 subgrant played a role in addressing these challenges? Please explain.

VII. Additions to the district profile

1. How many schools are in your district?

Elementary _____
Middle or Jr. High_____
High _____

2. Are there different types of schools in the district? [Probe: magnet, charter, etc.]

3. What is the per-pupil expenditure? Percent of support from the state, federal, local? Fiscal stability?

4. What are the general characteristics of the teaching staff?

Teacher-student ratios?
Average years of experience?
Average salary?
Teacher turnover?

5. What is the graduation rate in the district? The drop-out rate? Have there been significant changes in these rates in the past few years? To what do you attribute these changes? Do you anticipate changes in the next few years? Why or why not?

6. Can you provide us with documents that will help us understand your reform effort?

Goals 2000 Coordinator Protocol

Name_____
Title_____
Years in position_____
Prior Experience_____

NOTE: Questions will be added and/or modified based on the researchers' review of district documents and priorities related to standards-based reform.

I. Standards-based reform

1. Please provide a brief history of the district's reform effort. [Probe: When did the district first begin the process of standards-based reform? What do you consider to be the milestones in the district's reform effort (e.g., adoption of standards, new vision, etc.)? Use of assessments for continuous improvement?]

If not supplied above, ask #2:

2. How was the reform effort implemented in your district? [Probe: Starting with professional development? with new assessments? Organized by clusters? by grade levels?]

3. How much of your reform plan has been implemented? For example, how many schools have adopted the curriculum, how many teachers have been introduced to the standards, etc.?

4. What is your time table for full implementation of the reform plan?

5. What aspects of the reform effort have been particularly effective in improving teaching and learning in your district? What evidence suggests that these efforts have been effective?

6. What are the most important challenges to your district's reform effort? Has the Goals 2000 subgrant played a role in addressing these challenges? Please explain.

II. The role of Goals 2000 funds in the reform effort

1. What type of Goals 2000 subgrant did your district receive? During what year? What was the amount of the subgrant? (**Note to interviewer: Use this question to review information provided in selection criteria.**)

2. Which individuals were involved in writing the Goals 2000 subgrant proposal(s) for your district?

3. What reforms does the subgrant support? [Probe: the adoption or creation of standards, curriculum/assessment alignment, professional development?]

4. Why did your district apply for Goals 2000 funds?

5. Is your Goals 2000 subgrant(s) targeted at particular schools in the district? (e.g., high poverty schools, schools with poor test scores) [Probe: Have those targets changed across different Goals 2000 subgrants?]

6. What aspects of the Goals 2000 program enhance its contribution to systemic, standards-based reform? [Probe: flexibility, plan, amount of money, state's role in awarding/distributing]

7. What aspects of the Goals 2000 program diminish its contribution to systemic, standards-based reform?

8. In your opinion, where would your district stand in its reform effort without Goals 2000?

III. Sources of information and documentation

1. What individuals played key roles in the district's reform initiatives? [Probe: Nature of roles of... superintendent, curriculum and instruction coordinator, professional development coordinator, parental involvement coordinator]

2. What documents have been produced as a result of planning and implementing standards-based reform in the district? [Probe: standards, district improvement plan, school plans, district assessment plans and policies]

Goals 2000 Case Studies
District Curriculum Specialist Protocol

Name_____
Title_____
Yrs. in position_____
Prior experience_____

NOTE: Questions will be added and/or modified based on the researchers' review of district documents and priorities related to standards-based reform.

I. Curriculum in the reform effort

1. In your opinion, where does curriculum fit into the reform effort in this district? [Probe: driving assessment, being driven by assessment, major role, minor role?]

2. What goals, if any, have been set for curriculum reform in this district?

3. What major changes in curriculum have occurred in your district over the past few years?

4. How were these changes implemented?

5. What, in your opinion, was the impetus for these changes?

6. Are you familiar with Goals 2000 subgrants? If so, what reforms have been supported by the subgrant? Any related to the development or implementation of curriculum?

II. Standards-based reform

1. How were the state's standards translated into district policy?

2. Has your district adopted or developed content standards? [Probe: in what grades, subject areas?]

3. When did this occur and what was the process of development or adoption? [Probe: appointed committee, review team, school-level input, guidelines from state]

4. Has your district adopted or developed performance standards? [Probe: in what grades, subject areas?]

5. When did this occur and what was the process of development or adoption? [Probe: appointed committee, review team, school-level input, guidelines from state]

6. Have the standards been disseminated throughout the district? To what extent are teachers and principals in this district familiar with the district standards? With the state standards?

7. How did they receive this information?

8. Has the district developed/adopted a curriculum for teachers to follow that is aligned with the district standards? Has the state? [Probe: in what grades, subject areas?]

9. What was the process by which your district developed/adopted the curriculum? [Probe: appointed committee, review team, school-level input, guidelines from state]

10. Has the curriculum been disseminated throughout your district? To what extent are teachers and principals familiar with the district curriculum? With the state curriculum '

11. How did principals in the district receive this information? Teachers? Parents?

12. Is your district's curriculum aligned with district-level assessments? With state-level assessments? In what ways are the curriculum and assessment aligned?

13. What process did you use to align curriculum and assessment?

14. How has the curriculum affected professional development in the district?

III. Implementation of curriculum

1. How fully has the curriculum been implemented in the district?

2. Do you think the curriculum will/does affect teaching methods in the classroom? If so, how?

3. To what extent are your district adopted text-books and other instructional materials aligned with the district curriculum? [Probe: are there plans to align instructional materials with district standards? Where is the district in this process of alignment?]

4. What has been the response to the curriculum of administrators? Of teachers? Of students? Of parents?

5. In what areas has your district's curriculum effort been most successful? What role, if any, has Goals 2000 played in these successes? Please explain.

6. What factors do you think have contributed most to your district's success? [Probe: What factors have facilitated the implementation of the curriculum in the classroom?]

7. What are the greatest challenges in implementing the curriculum? How is the district

responding to these challenges? [Probe: what role does the district play in ensuring the implementation of the curriculum?]

8. Has the Goals 2000 subgrant played a role in addressing these challenges? Please explain.

9. Do you think the curricular changes have affected student outcomes on district and state assessments? If so, how?

V. Relationship with the state

1. In what ways, if any, does the state support the development of curricular policies and procedures? [Probe: financially, provision of guidelines, information, workshops, etc.)

2. In what ways, if any, does the state support the implementation of curricular policies and procedures?

3. In what ways, if any, does the state inhibit the development and implementation of curricular policies and procedures?

4. In what way, if any, does the state monitor the development and implementation of curricular policies and procedures?

5. Are there reports describing the curricular reform efforts in your district? Can you provide us with copies of these reports?

Goals 2000 Case Studies
District Assessment Specialist

Name_____
Title_____
Years in position_____
Prior Experience_____

NOTE: Questions will be added and/or modified based on the researchers' review of district documents and priorities related to standards-based reform.

I. The role of assessment in reform effort

1. What role does assessment play in the district-wide reform effort? In the state effort?

2. What goals, if any, have been set for assessment policy in the district? [Probe: plans to change/develop tests or test schedules, plans to change how test results are delivered]

3. What major changes in assessment policies and procedures have occurred in the past few years at the district level? at the state level?

4. How were these changes implemented?

5. What, in your opinion, was the impetus for these changes?

II. Types of assessment

1. What kinds of tests or assessments are required of students in your district? **(Note to interviewer: use this question to review information provided in selection interview.)** [Probe: state and local; norm- or criterion- referenced, portfolio, length of use, subjects and grades]

If district created its own tests, ask #2 and #3:

2. Why were the district tests developed? [Probe: How do they differ from previous tests?]

3. How were the tests developed? by whom? using what guidelines?

4. What types of skills are tested with each assessment? Higher-order or basic skills? Are writing samples or other authentic items required? Who scores these assessments?

5. How are the district and state assessments related?

III. Alignment with district and state standards

1. To what extent are the assessments aligned with state standards? With district standards? Please explain.

2. To what extent are the assessments aligned with district curriculum frameworks or guides? Please explain.

3. What was the process by which the district ensured that there is alignment between standards, assessment and curriculum within the district? Between the district and the state?

4. In what ways, if any, is assessment linked to professional development in the district? [Probe: links to curriculum and instruction, to provide information about the assessments, explain scores, set goals and targets?]

5. In what ways, if any, is assessment linked to family involvement in the district? [Probe: to provide information about the assessments to families, explain scores, set goals and targets?]

IV. Use of assessments

1. How are assessments used in your district?

[Probe:
- to identify students for categorical programs or graduation
- as incentives and rewards/sanctions for teachers, administrators, schools, districts?
- teacher evaluations
- influence curriculum or drive teacher practice
- school improvement planning
- public accountability report cards
- state accreditation
- other

2. In what ways do teachers use assessments in their daily work? [Probe: What breakouts do they have access to? How do they use this information?]

3. Do you think that assessments are used effectively by teachers? By the district? By the state? Why or why not?

4. What are the consequences for schools that do not meet district targets? For districts that do not meet state targets?

5. How has the assessment policy influenced your district? [Probe: impact on teaching practices? on student achievement?]

6. What challenges, if any, do state assessment policies pose for the district?

7. What challenges, if any, do the district's own assessment policies pose for the district?

8. What has your district done to address these challenges?

9. In what ways if any does the state support the development of district assessment policies and procedures? [Probe: financially, provision of guidelines, information, workshops, etc.)

10. In what ways if any does the state support the implementation of your district's assessment policies and procedures?

11. In what ways does the state inhibit the development and implementation of your district's assessment policies and procedures?

12. Are there reports describing the assessment efforts in your district? Assessment results? Can you provide us with copies of these reports?

V. Student performance

1. What are the overall targets for student achievement in your district? How do these targets relate to state targets, if there are state targets? Are there time tables for meeting these targets?

2. Have there been changes in student achievement levels reflected in assessments in your district? What changes have you seen? On which assessments? [Probe: Are the changes targeted or district-wide?]

3. What policies, procedures, and/or activities do you think have contributed to the changes in student test scores? Did Goals 2000 subgrants support these efforts?

4. Do you think the state (and district) assessments adequately measure student progress? Why or why not?

VI. Accomplishments and challenges

1. In what areas has your district's assessment policy been most successful? What role, if any, has Goals 2000 played in these successes? Please explain.

2. What factors do you think have contributed most to your district's success? [Probe: What factors have facilitated the implementation of the assessment policy?]

3. What are your district's greatest challenges in implementing its assessment policy? How is the district responding to these challenges? [Probe: what role does the district play in ensuring the implementation of the curriculum?]

4. Has the Goals 2000 subgrant played a role in addressing these challenges? Please explain.

Goals 2000 Case Studies
Professional Development Coordinator Protocol

Name_____
Title_____
Years in position_____
Prior Experience_____

NOTE: Questions will be added and/or modified based on the researchers' review of documents and priorities related to standards-based reform.

I. Professional development and standards-based reform

1. What goals, if any, has your district set for professional development? Are these goals aimed specifically at teachers or do they include other district personnel?

2. What role does professional development play in your district's reform efforts? In the state's reform efforts? [Probe: driver of reform, driven by curriculum, etc.]

3. In what ways is professional development in your district connected to reforms in assessment? In curriculum?

II. Professional development and Goals 2000 subgrants

1. How has the Goals 2000 and/or TLCF awards supported your district's work in professional development? [Probe: bought teachers' time, substitutes, consultants, software, professional development schools]

2. What other funds does the district use in conjunction with the Goals 2000 and/or TLCF funds to support professional development?

III. Professional development plan/strategy

1. Has your district developed a strategic plan for professional development? Is this plan available for review?

2. Please describe the major focus of your professional development plan (or strategy, if no plan exists).
Probe: What area(s) does the plan/strategy target? What grade-levels?
How much professional development is provided to each teacher? Administrator?

3. Please explain how decisions about professional development are made in your district. [Probe: Is professional development in your district very centralized or do schools make decisions about the type of professional development that teachers and administrators receive? Do teachers have any input?]

4. What percentage of the teachers in your district have been exposed to professional development activities related to the districts' reform efforts?

5. Please describe your implementation process. [Probe: by grade-level, vertical cluster, geographic area]

6. What types of professional development activities does your district offer? [Probe: Collaborative planning, action research, reading groups, workshops, peer coaching, trainer-of-trainer models, teacher observations (by administrators, of each other), content are or grade-level teaching teams/meetings, curriculum development, scoring of assessments]

III. Professional development needs

1. In what areas do you think teachers need the greatest amount of professional development? Administrators? Please explain.

2. How is your district addressing this need?

3. How are teachers responding to the professional development activities sponsored by your district? Administrators?

4. Have you seen changes in teaching practices as a result of the professional development offered? In school operations?

IV. Accomplishments and challenges

1. What are the most important challenges to your district's professional development effort? Has the Goals 2000/TLCF funding played a role in addressing these challenges? Please explain.

2. In what areas of professional development has your district been most successful? [Probe: changing practice, altering attitudes and expectations, raising test scores, introducing new assessments, etc.]

3. What factors do you think contribute to these successes? What role, if any, has Goals 2000/TLCF funding played in these successes?

Focus Group with Principals

I. Goals and components of the reform effort

1. What are the goals of the reform effort in _____ [insert the name of the district]. [Probe: Higher standards for all children; curriculum and instruction changes; improved student performance; professional development]

2. How has the reform effort been implemented in your district? [Probe: Starting with professional development? with new assessments? Organized by clusters? by grade levels?]

3. What are the goals of the reform effort in your school?

4. How are the reform efforts at the district-level and the school-level related?

5. Do you think the current reform efforts will improve student learning? Why or why not?

II. Goals 2000

1. Are you familiar with Goals 2000 subgrants? If so, what reforms have been supported by Goals 2000 in the district? at your school?

[Other questions will be asked about specific reforms supported by Goals 2000 funds, as identified by the district
1.
2.]

III. Standards-based reform

1. Your state and district have aligned (are aligning) curriculum and assessment to assure that all students meet higher academic standards. To what extent are assessment and curriculum aligned in the district? In your school?

2. What do you think the effect of this alignment has been? [Probe: teaching practices, student achievement]

3. Does the district provide curriculum guides or frameworks? In your opinion, are they useful to the teachers in your building? Why or why not?

4. Do you think the state (and district) assessments adequately measure student progress? Why or why not?

5. How has the assessment policy influenced your school? [Probe: impact on teaching practices? on student achievement?]

IV. School-level reform

1. How was the reform effort developed at your school? How was it implemented? What role did you play in developing the school plan? Teachers? The district?

2. Do you think your school has changed (is changing) significantly as a result of the reform effort? If so, how? If not, why? [Probe for common school goals]

3. How much professional development do (did) your teachers receive about reform efforts in your district? About reform efforts at your school? Who provides the professional development? Is it sufficient in quality and amount, in your opinion?

4. In what ways has teaching in your school changed as a result of the professional development provided?

5. Can you provide us with any documents related to your schools' reform efforts?

V. Challenges and supports

1. What are some of the challenges that you face in raising standards for all children and implementing reform in your schools? [Probe: lack of resources, funding, student and/or teacher apathy, unrealistic expectations, family involvement, etc.]

2. What are the resources and supports that you need to raise the academic achievement levels of all children? To what extent have you received these resources and supports? From whom?

3. In what ways has the district supported your efforts to help all students improve their academic performance? [Probe: professional development (for principals); professional development for teachers, flexible spending, site-based management, etc.]

4. Do you think the reform effort has been (will continue to be) successful in increasing the academic performance of all students? Why or why not?

Focus Group with Teachers

I. Goals and components of the reform effort

1. What are the goals of the reform effort in _____ [insert the name of the district]. [Probe: Higher standards for all children; curriculum and instruction changes; improved student performance; professional development]

2. How familiar are you with the state and district standards? Can you summarize them?

3. What are the goals of the reform effort in your school?

4. How are the reform efforts at the district-level and the school-level related?

5. Do you think the current reform efforts will improve student learning? Why or why not?

II. The role of Goals 2000 in the reform effort

Are you familiar with Goals 2000 subgrants? If so, what reforms have been supported by the subgrant?

[Other questions will be asked about specific reforms supported by Goals 2000 funds, as identified by the district
1.
2.]

III. Standards-based reform

1. Your state and district have aligned (are aligning) curriculum and assessment to assure that all students meet higher academic standards. To what extent are assessment and curriculum aligned in the district? In your school?

2. What do you think has been the effect of this alignment?

3. Does the district provide curriculum guides or frameworks? In your opinion, are they useful to the teachers in your building? Why or why not?

4. Do you think the state (and district) assessments adequately measure student progress? Why or why not?

5. How has the assessment policy influenced your school? [Probe: impact on teaching practices? on student achievement?]

IV. School-level reform

1. How was the reform effort developed at your school? How was it implemented? What role did teachers play? School-level administrators? The district?

2. Do you think your school has changed (is changing) significantly as a result of the reform effort? If so, how? If not, why not? [Probe for common school goals]

3. How much professional development did you receive about reform efforts in your district? About reform efforts at your school? Was the professional development clearly linked to standards?

4. Who provided the professional development? Were you satisfied with the quality and amount of professional development offered? Why?

5. In what ways has your teaching changed as a result of the professional development provided?

V. Challenges and supports

1. What are some of the challenges that you face in raising standards for all children and implementing reform in your schools? [Probe: lack of resources, funding, student apathy, unrealistic expectations, family involvement, etc.]

2. What are the resources and supports that you need to successfully work with all children? To what extent have you received these resources and supports? From whom?

3. In what ways has the district provided support to you in your efforts to help all students improve their academic performance? [Probe: curriculum frameworks, professional development

4. Do you think the reform effort has been (will continue to be) successful in increasing the academic performance of all students? Why?

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